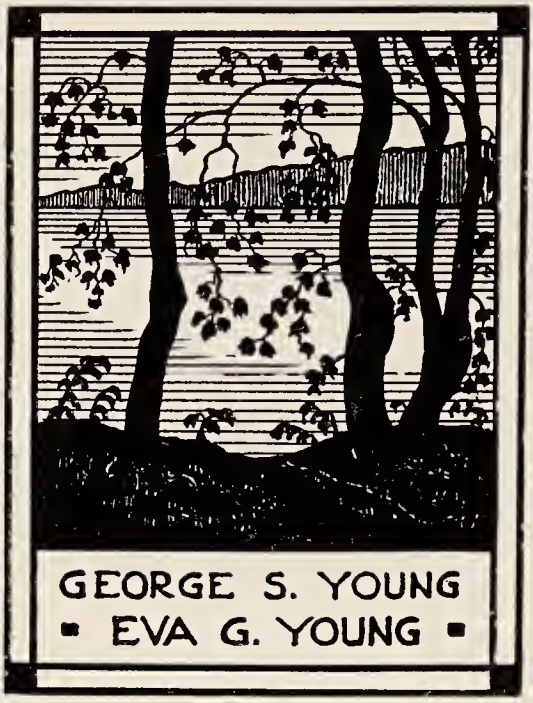
BLISS CARMAN

by

JAMES CAPPON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BLISS CARMAN

AND THE LITERARY CURRENTS AND INFLUENCES OF HIS TIME

by

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TO
MY OLD STUDENTS
AT QUEEN'S

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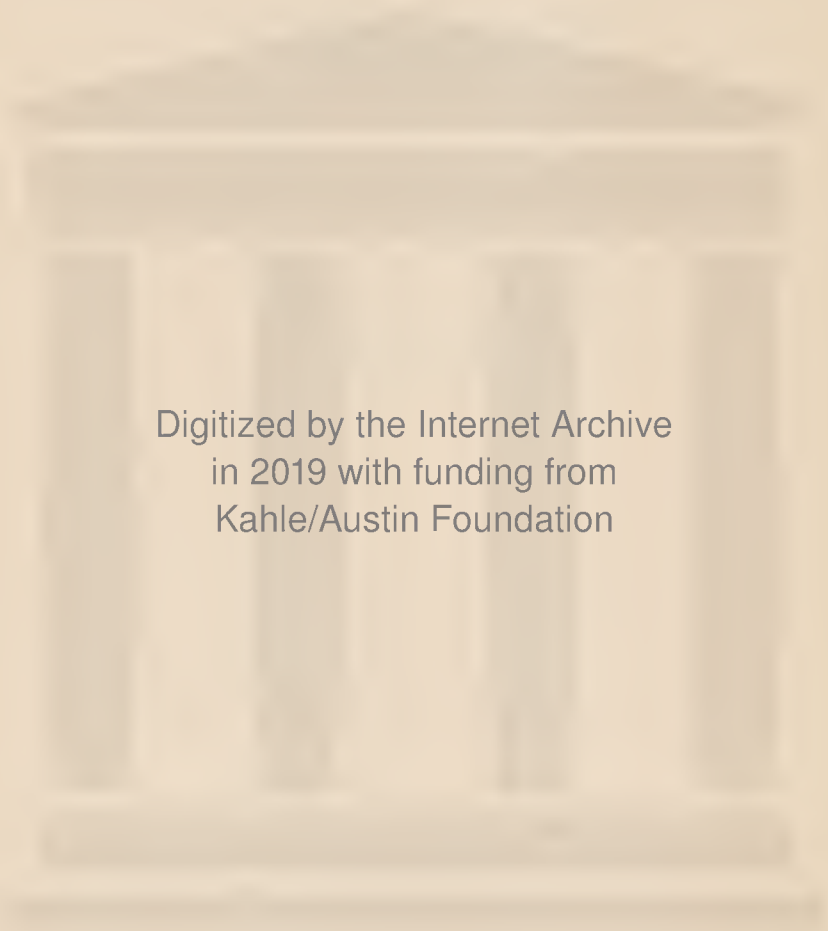
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PREFATORY NOTE

This book is partly biographical and partly general literary history, Carman's work being viewed in its relations, both of affinity and of contrast, to the literary movements of his time. The latter are often given a kind of independent treatment to illustrate the situation.

J. C.

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BLISS CARMAN

I

BEGINNINGS

CARMAN'S exceptional distinction amongst Canadian poets is very generally recognized now. There is an individuality in his voice which reaches the ear clearly amongst all contemoprary strains, and he represents better than any other of our Canadian singers the effort of modern poetry in the nineties to break through into new poetic horizons. He had, even in his earliest period, a circle of devoted admirers who were fascinated by the mystical wildness of his first songs, and since the publication of his SONGS FROM VAGABONDIA in collaboration with the American poet, Richard Hovey, professional critics and reviewers in the United States do not forget him in their historical reviews. In Canada he has been getting more general attention of late years. A recent history of Canadian literature recognizes him in rather exclusive terms as really "great" [1] and some years ago, an association of Canadian authors acclaimed him in a more or less formal way as Canada's poet laureate or at least its chief singer, much in the same way as gatherings of Parisian poets and writers, mostly the younger ones, bestowed on Verlaine and Mallarmé the title of prince

[1] *Highways of Canadian Literature,* by Logan and French.

of the poets, and as they did quite recently on Paul Fort. The Parisian event in these cases had a special significance as the crowning of a champion of new and revolutionary methods, of a new ARS POETICA, which had at least won its place in literary history; it did not necessarily establish an uncontested primacy, but was rather the younger generation's way of sending out a challenge to the older literary tradition, a challenge very often recanted or silently dropped in their maturer years. There was indeed something new to Canadian poetry in Carman's technique and treatment, and highly individual, but it was not a revolt against the old literary tradition and its standards so much as a new development of them; it is, except for some lighter Vagabondia songs, the late highly refined development of great historic schools, chiefly of Victorian romanticism in the lyric and of the half mystical transcendental vision of life and nature you find in the great New Englanders, Emerson and Thoreau. He carries that form of vision into new fields and gives it novelty of aspect. His search for a new handling of themes, for new illustrations and variations, shows a wide range of experimentation; and though the moulds of his art are the established or traditional forms, his retouch is genial and creative; there are no raw tones, the style and the music are rich with the memories of art, yet fresh and tartly flavoured in a new Canadian atmosphere.

Yet there does not seem to be any very clear or definite appreciation of Carman's work as a whole in the public, even amongst persons whose reading has a fair

range and includes most of what is talked of and discussed in the critical reviews. There is little idea of what he has tried to do. And it is no great wonder, a good deal of his poetry is somewhat mystical, almost esoteric, his typical treatment of a subject is transcendental even if there are brilliant descriptive passages in it and glimpses of the actual. His volumes are filled with metaphysical symbolism and allegory and transcendental interpretations of nature. His cosmic vision embraces with equal sympathy Christian and Pagan legend, the revelations of Patmos and the message of Buddha, the Emersonian Oversoul, the symbolism of Pan and the mediaeval visions of St. Bernard, finding a transcendental identity in them all. The mysticism of the East is mingled with modern theories of evolution. Darwin supplements Wordsworth in his nature poetry and blends with Rossetti in a love lyric. There is a transcendental truth in it all, no doubt, but there is on the surface at least, a heterogeneity, an over-saturation of his poetry with diverse symbols, which many readers may find disconcerting.

In his nature poetry however the reader is more likely to feel an underlying harmony in his treatment. It is at times a mystical cult with various forms of symbolism and cosmic philosophy inspiring it, and often merely fanciful, but often also it blends happily the æsthetic and cosmic aspects of nature and gives a new depth, anyway a new and fresh charm, to his poetic interpretation of nature. His description is full of fine touches and has the native Canadian love and enjoyment of wild nature, of flowers and forests, the songs of birds, air and

sunshine and free horizons. There are new readings of nature in that poetry, especially impressionistic flashes and mystical illuminations of his cosmic idea.

One need not wonder then that the estimate of Carman is vaguer and more hesitant in many quarters than it need be. All the same there is always a certain depth in such popular recognitions as that which Carman received from the Montreal Assembly, where the political game does not come into the piece. Besides the delicate grace of his style, "magic of phrase, melodious versification," etcetera, which professional critics have always recognized, and the original turn of fancy which gives piquancy and temperament to his verse, I imagine there was a general sense of the spiritual distinction in a life like his entirely devoted to the unprofitable business of verse-making and content with the riches it could create for itself in the world of poetic reverie, if little more should come of it. Carman lived his poetry and got out of it apparently what his temperament chiefly demanded of life.

One must of course look in the soil from which Carman came for much that determined the character of his poetic work. His family was of the old Puritan stock of New England having transferred itself to Canada when the American colonies separated themselves from Britain. He was born at Fredericton, a small town in New Brunswick, half rural with its gardens and surrounding woods, but of some importance as the capital of the province and the seat of a small university. It was a busy place too, some months of the year, with the small

shipping of those days, for though it was some sixty miles from the sea, it was situated on a navigable river, the St. John, which gave Fredericton some stimulating contact with the great commercial world. But on the whole life there was in a quiet idyllic atmosphere very favourable to the spiritual traditions of New England Puritanism in homes like those of the Carmans and their cousins of the Roberts family, in which literature was a kind of daily bread. Books were the great resource in the evenings of a long winter. In poetry Longfellow and Whittier, Cowper and Wordsworth were still the classics in such homes; you can see the lyrical tone of Longfellow often haunts the ear of Carman and occasionally that of Roberts, but the young generation had also begun to recognize new deities in Keats and Shelley and to regard Emerson and Thoreau with their transcendental cult of nature and the simple life as their spiritual guides. Their message would come as a very natural thing to the young Canadians with the wild nature around them so free of access to every one, and the brilliant Canadian summer with its clear sky and sunshine taking all Canadian poets as boys to the woods and streams for their recreations. In those days camping and canoeing had no rival in the golf course or the modern country club.

Carman's schooling also was of a kind that developed his tendencies toward literature. The headmaster at the Fredericton Academy, Dr. George Parkin, was a man of exceptional personality and energy; he was perhaps more of a practical man in his aims than of the contemplative or scholarly type; he became widely known in

later life as a platform speaker on behalf of Imperial interests and as Secretary for the Rhodes Foundation at Oxford; but he had the old Victorian respect for literary culture and he was one to do with enthusiasm whatever he took in hand: we have stories of the energy with which he drilled Carman and Roberts in the poets often reciting Tennyson and Rossetti to them when he took them out for a walk.

It became clear enough in time that nature had given young Carman a contemplative habit of mind and the kind of faculty which realizes itself best in literature, but that is not the kind of gift which indicates very precisely the path by which it is to be made good in the world. Carman himself at this time does not seem to have been conscious of any call to a poetic career, nor even to have had any definite ideas as to what he should do eventually with himself. But that he went at this time to Edinburgh university for a postgraduate course looks as if he had at least some half-formed thoughts of qualifying himself for an academic position. He admitted something of the kind to me, but dubiously. The opportunities in that direction were by no means so plentiful then as they are now with the greatly increased staffs of our modern universities. In any case he does not seem to have made much headway at Edinburgh or to have brought back much of anything from that quarter; he was not the type of a hard working prizeman, he had fine perceptions and intuitions in the field of the humanities certainly, but after a close acquaintance with his published volumes I cannot fancy him as great in system-

atic preparation or in work which was not sustained chiefly by imagination and reverie. I can understand as far as the old Scottish seat of learning itself is concerned, that he was not much attracted by Campbell Fraser's lectures on Berkeley or even by Masson's analysis of Milton's blank verse. Perhaps there is also something characteristic in the fact that he did not, by his own account, have any quickening contact with the new literary currents that were beginning to stir literary circles in the old country. The literary fermentation which ended in the outflare of the nineties was already seeking an outlet, chiefly in æsthetic cults. The Ballade school was reviving old forms of French verse as a vehicle for modern wit and pathos, and William Sharpe's biography of Rossetti with its prophecies of a great future for what he called the new æsthetic movement in poetry appeared in 1882 while Carman was still in Edinburgh. About the same time F. W. H. Myers was writing enthusiastic articles on the "Religion of Beauty" in the new poetry, Pater in his critical essays was promulgating a very refined æsthetic gospel, and Oscar Wilde was taking over to America his paradoxical audacities in æsthetics and his theory of a new Renaissance in art, —Carman indeed met him at the Roberts house in Fredericton. It was a kind of secondary æsthetic outgrowth from Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelitism cut off from its original moral roots. Something of that æsthetic movement began to influence him later but it does not seem to have had any awakening impulse for him at this time.

Perhaps it was too meagre a gospel for a young Canadian with his traditions.

So it was that he returned to Canada in 1883 still unsettled as to his future course and at a loss what to do with himself. For a time he tried various things, chiefly to satisfy his parents, Roberts said to me; taught school for a while, then gave up that to study law, then left law to work as a civil engineer. But it was evidently all against the grain, and after three years of this abortive experimenting, he returned to academic study, this time at Harvard University. It was a sound instinct that made this young man—twenty-five years of age he was now and still very much in the vague about himself—take to Harvard as a preparation for some kind of intellectual or journalistic work in the new field of the United States with the stimulating scale of its activities. It is true that University culture is conservative in its standards as it ought to be, a kind of rational counterpoise to the passing exaggerations of the day and the narrowness of spirit that is hardly alive to anything beyond its local horizon. The university gets many kicks therefore from a reckless or thoughtless class of critics. I can remember the wild hootings of Marinetti and the Italian Futurists on that subject twenty years ago, and in America one hears still a good deal of disparagement from reviewers who would have the public believe that Sandburg's "Chicago" or Amy Lowell's "Thompson's Lunch Counter" are summits of poetic art. But for all that, or because of all that, it is just in the States that one has to go to the university to get real freedom of outlook and reach larger horizons.

Carman at any rate seems to have got what he wanted at Harvard—the awakening impulse. He made good friends like Richard Hovey and others of an intellectual or artistic type, full of youthful enthusiasm to do something great and helping each other to get at and assimilate the best and highest within their reach in the American culture of that day.

It was not perhaps the most invigorating phase of American culture. The old native transcendentalism of the New England writers was still the finest element in it but from the mere force of age and repetition it was not the new inspiring thing it had been twenty years before; it needed renewal, some development that would give it the charm and force of originality. Whitman had already sought to do this in his way, but his way was one which coarsened the high lessons of Emerson by delivering them in the language of an inspired hobo and with a hobo's contempt for discipline of any kind. Emerson's high doctrine of ecstatic utterance was turned into a reckless principle of saying anything that came into one's head, his independence of thought into a defiance of all the culture of the past, his faith in the future of his country into an extravagant Chauvinism, his recommendation of contemplative solitude into the gorgeous kind of loafing which was common in Walt's own life, and so on with all the rest of it. Yet in the bold naturalism of Whitman's early Chants there is an honest attempt to get the full breadth of human nature, even with its lower levels, into a philosophy of life. It was stated with the extravagance and exaggeration which are al-

most necessary parts of his system and was far from receiving an unqualified recognition except from uncritical Radicalism; but still in the eighties Whitman stood along with Emerson as representing the intellectual and spiritual problems of the time for young literary aspirants. You can see elements from both mingled in the Vagabondia songs of Carman and Hovey.

It was at Harvard also that Carman acquired the technical culture in philosophy which gave him most help in systematizing his ideas about life. His academic studies there do not seem to have won him any specific distinction, but they brought him into contact with Professor Royce, then the leading light in philosophy at Harvard. Royce taught a form of Spinozistic idealism which could serve very well as a philosophic substructure for the mystical contemplation and reverie which make up so large a part of his poetic world. The conception it gives of the Infinite and its manifestations is the groundwork of his thinking; even its formal logic often comes to the surface in his poetry. In short, it was in the Harvard environment that his thoughts of a career began to take more definite direction. For the first time he now began to think of poetry as possibly his vocation and to print single poems occasionally in broadsheet for private circulation among his friends.

The vision as interpretation of life is of course the first thing, the fundamental impulse in poetry and in all higher art, but the question of style or form is the thing that challenges the poet first, and it may be most menacingly, when he begins to write. The first essays of a

young poet are likely to be full of borrowed elements, tones, turns of phrase and fancy, and especially a plane of imagination or of thought which is recognizably that of a well known school or of a great predecessor. Carman's borrowings are always very obvious. Among the early influences you can find in his poetry, that of Edgar Allan Poe is very distinct. There was a certain affinity between Carman's mood of transcendental reverie and the dream-like fantasy in Poe's poetry. Poe was a great American tradition, too, though one which had lain rather neglected in the shade of New England Puritanism. The rapid melodious flow of his verse and the weird Plutonian gleam of his fancy carrying you to some distant mysterious shore or unknown Aïdenn in the Land of Heart's Desire were amongst the rare things of poetic art. Poe's prose, too, with its imaginative vigour of invention and the extraordinary logical precision and force of its style was as unique as his poetry. Only de Quincey's could rival it in conveying certain effects. It might not be always quite sound in its wonderful ratiocinative constructions, there was often a morbid or paradoxical twist in the inexorable logic and a sombre diabolism in the fancy which discredited him a little with the austere generation of his time. But these were just the qualities which were coming into vogue towards the end of the century. In France Poe's writings had attracted the attention of Baudelaire and after him that of the French Decadents and Symbolists, who were now proclaiming him as the only original genius in American poetry. Both Baudelaire and Mallarmé occupied them-

selves with translations of him and this French reaction in favour of Poe may have been one of the suggestive hints or emanations—you could hardly call them more—which Carman received from that quarter, probably through Hovey who had spent some time in the haunts of Parisian artists and poets and knew the talk there.

Among the early poems of Carman "Pulvis et Umbra" is a striking example both of Poe's influence on his imagination at this time and of the way in which he makes what he borrows his own by additions and transformations. The poem is an original sort of fantasia on Poe's "Raven." The poet floats away through time and space into those twilight chambers of fancy that Poe loves, and drapes them, much as Poe did, in sombre hues of gloom and mystery. The night-moth as a visitor to the lonely study has not quite the sombre significance of the raven with his refrain of "Nevermore," but Carman is able to give a *locale*, a cottage near the sea, a fine bodeful colour of mystery and doom:

> Harvest with her low red planets
> Wheeling over Arrochar;
> And the lonely hopeless calling
> Of the bell-buoy on the bar,
>
> Where the sea with her old secret
> Moves in sleep and cannot rest.
> From that dark beyond my doorway,
> Silent the unbidden guest
>
> Came and tarried, fearless, gentle,
> Vagrant of the starlit gloom,
> One frail waif of beauty fronting
> Immortality and doom;

One can see there that the gentle accents and mild phrase of Longfellow are haunting his ear, but in the series of questions which he puts to his little guest, the gleam of Poe's phantasy is evident:

> Surely thou art not that sun-bright
> Psyche, hoar with age, and hurled
> On the northern shore of Lethe,
> To this wan Auroral world!
>
> Ghost of Psyche, uncompanioned,
> Are the yester-years all done?
> Have the oars of Charon ferried
> All thy playmates from the sun?

Some exuberance of treatment is natural enough in a young poet who is reluctant of course to drop a single flower of fancy from his chaplet, but Carman's tendency to a loose expansiveness of fancy is rather marked in the poem. He loads it with cosmic analogies which are often terribly overstretched. The frail being of the insect sinks in a sea of far-fetched illustrations:

> In the hush when Cleopatra
> Felt the darkness reel and cease,
> Was thy soul a wan blue lotus
> Laid upon her lips for peace?

It is the young poet's intoxication with his own music and his command of imaginative phrase that makes him despise self-censorship, a virtue he never learned to use much anyway. But there is the music and a brilliant use of the old romantic phrase with a new strain of mystical reverie in it.

Poe's theories of poetic art also would seem to have

had considerable influence on Carman at this formative period of his career. Poe was in some respects an anticipation of the new symbolist tendencies in poetry. The principles he lays down in that curious "philosophy of composition" which he appended to "The Raven" are quite in the spirit of the symbolist movement in France. That "indefinite suggestiveness of meaning" which he insists on as the essence of poetic effect was part of its creed. "The actual situation and circumstances," Poe writes, "are to be only dimly outlined, leaving an undercurrent of significance which never comes clearly to the surface". So also when he insists on the subordination of truth and of passion to æsthetic beauty, he is seeking the same freedom for poetry as is demanded in Mallarmé's brusque precept, "*Exclus-en le réel, parce que vil*". But what in Poe is purely an artistic theory putting aside an undesirable limitation of poetic art becomes a metaphysical theory in Mallarmé which rejects the sensuous surface of the world as an inferior form of reality unworthy of true poetry. It is the ideal of *la poésie pure* so much heard of now in modernist French schools. We have a special form of it too in Mr. Yeats's charmingly written essays on symbolism, but he raises it into a mystical theory of the symbolical relation of material things to a divine essence. Carman's ideal of poetry at this time is still vaguely æsthetic, many of his early poems are pure phantasies in Poe's manner. The mysterious background, the vaguely outlined situation, the tone of sadness which Poe recommends as the highest note of poetry (a tone quite discarded in Carman's later

poetry and indeed professionally disowned), even Poe's specific suggestion that the loss of a beautiful woman bewailed by her lover is the most effective of poetic subjects, and that there should be a "circumscription of space" to a chamber or garden made sacred by memories of some lost Lenore, all these as well as some other minor suggestions are faithfully followed in Carman's Gwendolen poems, and other lyrics of that type, eventually collected and published in his first volume *Low Tide on Grand Pré*. They read as if they might have been written to try out Poe's theories. The treatment of the theme in "When the Guelder Roses Bloom" for example, with its undefined situation, its vague emotionalism, its suggestion of bereavement and its wailing refrain is quite according to Poe's recipe.

When the Guelder roses blow,
Love that died so long ago,

Why wilt thou return so oft,
With that whisper sad and soft

On thy pleading lips again,
"Guendolen, Guendolen"!

In "A Northern Vigil", the situation is a little more defined, the figure of the lost Lenore being brought more into the foreground by some personal touches; the sense of cosmic space and doom with their cold vastness gives a mystical depth to the emotions. Some stanzas carry an aura of that kind to us very sucessfully, others—there are twenty-two of them—do their best to spoil it by dilation and repetition.

O wayward will, come near
The old mad willful way,
The soft mouth at my ear
With words too sweet to say!

Come, for the night is cold,
The ghostly moonlight fills
Hollow and rift and fold
Of the eerie Ardise hills!

The windows of my room
Are dark with bitter frost,
The stillness aches with doom
Of something loved and lost.

Outside, the great blue star
Burns in the ghostland pale,
Where giant Algebar
Holds on the endless trail.

Come, for the years are long,
And silence keeps the door,
Where shapes with the shadows throng
The firelit chamber floor.

It is the fine fantasia of a young artist playing loosely on the keys all the old romantic chords he loves in poetry, love, night, the ghostly moonlight and the stars, and the long years, the shadows and the silence of doom. His "eerie Ardise hills" are the equivalent of Poe's distant Aïdenn. There is always the weight of mystery, the sky or the sea is full of omens, the wind brings foreboding messages as surely as it would do in an Irish peasant's song. In "The Eavesdropper" the situation is still that of a landscape with two lovers, but the atmosphere is vibrating with a cosmic mystery which stills all sensuous emotion.

And all the swarthy afternoon
We watched the great deliberate sun
Walk through the crimsoned hazy world
Counting his hilltops one by one.

Then as the purple twilight came
And touched the vines along our eaves,
Another shadow stood without
And gloomed the dancing of the leaves.

. . . . . .

Restless and vague as a gray wind
Her heart had grown, she knew not why.
But hurrying to the open door,
Against the verge of western sky

I saw retreating on the hills,
Looming and sinister and black,
The stealthy figure swift and huge
Of one who strode and looked not back.

Such poetry is mostly an impassioned creation of the imagination, its object being not so much an actuality to be held firmly, as Goethe said, in its contours as an ineffable presence that can only be vaguely suggested. But among these early lyrics there is one in which Carman has raised this vague emotionality into classical clearness and firmness of structure. In "Low Tide on Grand Pré" the situation and the emotions are definite enough to suggest that some fibre of reality is stirring in its reminiscences. There is still the shadow of a lost Lenore in it, but its pensive melancholy is without weirdness or mystery.

Was it a year or lives ago
We took the grasses in our hands,
And caught the summer flying low
Over the waving meadow lands,
And held it there between our hands?

The while the river at our feet—
A drowsy inland meadow stream—
At set of sun the after-heat
Made running gold, and in the gleam
We freed our birch upon the stream.

. . . . . .

And that we took into our hands
Spirit of life or subtler thing—
Breathed on us there, and loosed the bands
Of death, and taught us, whispering,
The secret of some wonder-thing.

Carman's manner has changed a little there. The touch is more that of Tennyson in description, and you can hear at times the very accents of "In Memoriam":

And yet I know that not for us,
By any ecstasy of dream, . . .

"Low Tide on Grand Pré" is too slight an effort to be called a masterpiece—that much abused word in America and in book-cover testimonials everywhere—but it is an unforgetable addition to the stock of fine Canadian lyrics. And for once the poet has been careful not to destroy the plastic perfection of his poem by dilation or too much vagrancy of fancy.

Poe was but a passing influence in Carman's early songs though no doubt he helped to confirm Carman's tendency to envelop his themes in an atmosphere of vague mystery. Our poet's verse-forms at this period are nearly always those of the old English lyrical schools, simple quatrain verse with a single rhyme and with hardly ever any attempt at the stanzaic variety which

Poe recommended. Amongst these the ballad is a favourite form; he has a real talent for the ballad and continued for a time to use various forms of it from imitations of the ancient ballad of gramarye to the ballad of modern adventure and of symbolic allegory. Imitations of the ancient tragic ballad had been long in vogue with the romantic schools of poetry in Germany and England. The Pre-Raphaelites had done a good deal to renew the interest in the world of mediaeval legend by infusing a new note of æsthetic refinement into it. Rossetti in particular had popularized the æsthetic transformation of the old ballad of weird adventure. Sometimes he uses the simpler ballad style, as Scott and Campbell often did, with its rapid narrative, sudden transitions, curt vivid descriptive strokes, and all the mannerisms of address, iteration and lament which were the common stock of the old minstrels, and sometimes he expands it as Keats and Coleridge had done, with a modern and mystical intensity of feeling. Carman is quite a considerable contributor to this Ballad School, and the style of the old ballad of gramarye in particular was naturally very congenial to his spirit at this time. It was a way of escape for him from modern realism and the logical limits of reality into the freedom of a mystical world. "The Yule Guest", which is one of his best known ballads is of this type and belongs to this very early period; it is an imitation of the old Ghost ballad and modernizes very successfully the bold and graphic simplicity of old ballad style. The opening stanza is perfect.

And Yanna by the yule-log
Sat in the empty hall,
And watched the goblin firelight
Caper upon the wall:

The story follows the Old Ghost ballads in its main events. The ghost of Yanna's husband, a sailor, comes at midnight to her door and calls, in orthodox fashion:

O, Yanna, Yanna, Yanna,
Be quick and let me in!
For bitter is the trackless way
And far that I have been!
. . . . . .

She's led him to the fireside,
And set the wide oak chair, . . .

The swift graphic strokes and vivid phrases of the old ballad are excellently caught, and his command of mystical or mysterious atmosphere serves him well in the poem. He often widens the range of sentiment in a way that is a fine blending of old ballad style and the modern sense of life:

O Garvin, there is heartache
In tales that are half told;

Sometimes he introduces a symbolism that is his own and quite modern:

O Garvin, bonny Garvin,
What is the booming sound
Of canvas, and the piping shrill,
As when a ship comes round?

It is the shadow boatswain
Piping his hands to bend
The looming sails on giant yards
Aboard the Nomansfriend.

Carman gets tone and atmosphere very successfully in general, the visionary tale is well sustained by wonderful touches of style, but the poem is drawn out more than suits its type—there are fifty-four stanzas of it—and his expansions often weaken it and sometimes threaten the mystical atmosphere with their domestic detail. The ghost of course must leave at dawn, but before he does so Carman makes him put Yanna to bed with all circumstance, smooth her pillow and sing her to sleep and make an appointment for next year, which are hardly decent proceedings in a ghost.

Such poems as I have been speaking of may be taken as representing Carman's early leanings towards the æsthetic schools of poetry and an almost purely æsthetic exercise of his imaginative faculty. But even in them we see that his imagination is haunted by a sense of mystical super-realities which earlier Poes and Gautiers had only played with as artists. In some of the poems of this period there is already a systematic symbolism which seeks to make a moral synthesis of life. Its core is the vision of human life and nature distinctive of Emerson and the New England transcendentalists. The strong craving for infinite issues to human life and individual destiny was combined in those Puritan transcendentalists with a cosmic sense of nature and nature's laws which they interpreted in a way to reinforce it. The history of man is a quest for a spiritual infinitude of destiny. The philosophical romanticism of that school with its profound nostalgia of the infinite and eternal was a necessity of the soul in men who were suffering

acutely from the decay of the old eschatological faith; they had to replace it as best they could with a transcendental interpretation of human history and nature. The idea of the mystical quest of poets and thinkers as the dedicated warriors of the spirit, of the religious mission of art and literature were an inspiration to Carman whose spirit was quite untouched by the decadentism of contemporary poetry, or its philosophic doubt. In "The Bugles", a poem printed for private circulation in 1891, there is a mystical symbolism which blends a cosmic sense of nature with the spiritual history of man, just as the New England Transcendentalists did, though it expresses itself in the vaguer and more romantic phrase which the Neo-Celtic school was bringing into vogue. Such phrases in Carman's poems as "the lonely trail", "the shadowy quest", "the gates of doom", "the battle of Sombre Field", represent the same gnostic exaltation and love of mystical horizon as Fiona's "Hills of Dream" and "high sweet call of release", or Yeats's "Land of Heart's Desire" and the form of vision in his Rose poems. "The Bugles" was printed in New York with the note that "it forms one of a lyric series, 'The Battle of Sombre Field' ".

The scarlet cry
Of a bugle's wail
Goes fading by
On a lonely trail;

. . . . . .

Once through the arch
Of the Autumn wood,
I saw the march
Of a giant brood.

BEGINNINGS

I heard no tread
Of the warriors there,
But the hills were red
With the bugle's blare;

On the shadowy quest
That is never done,
They strode abreast
Of the wheeling sun,

With no retreat
Through the hazy flume,
They marched to beat
At the gates of doom.

For these were they
Whom glory sealed
In the brunt of the fray
On Sombre Field.

The allegory is complete enough in the first sixteen stanzas, though Carman in his loose way tacks on to it twenty more, descriptive of spring phenomena, April days, the swell of sap and seed, the voice of the whippoorwill, et cetera. The philosophic connection of course is the common awakening of cosmic impulses on the endless trail, but the two worlds do not blend well in the poem.

After his course at Harvard, Carman had drifted naturally enough into professional journalism for a living. In 1890 he became an office-editor of the New York *Independent*. Journalism and poetry or imaginative literary creation of some kind is now a common combination amongst writers, especially in the United States, perhaps more to the advantage of the former than the latter. He was, I have always heard, both diligent and methodical in his editorial work, "clearing his desk at the

end of the day," says a friend, "with exemplary regularity." But he does not seem to have made much of a success of it. A poet's judgment in newspaper work may often be less in line with the public's taste than a base-ball champion's would be. In any case, routine work would not be very congenial to a poet of Carman's type, with his habit of meditative idleness and a freakish faculty of extracting translunary wisdom from day-dreams and visionary horizons. The work-a-day world with its business standards and daily worries would involve for him a considerable withdrawal of his energies from those mystical poetic contacts, and a loss of his best hours. Should he emancipate himself or remain safe but bound between the shafts? I fancy there was a good deal of interior debate with himself over that. Some high American traditions of that day were rather in favour of a bold venture; there was the example of Thoreau with his brave philosophy of the simple life; Whitman's also, who never hesitated to desert work in order "to loaf and invite his soul". So Carman, after a year or two of editorial labour, abandoned it for an independent career as a poet, and, in 1893, made his formal appearance as such before the public in a small volume of lyrics. It took its title from the opening poem which was on the whole the most perfect thing he had done yet, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*.

It needed some courage at Carman's age—he was now thirty-two—to take to poetry as a means of livelihood. He had no supplementary resources in literature, no popular or ready vein in prose, and no art as a platform

lecturer. Nevertheless there was a good deal to make him venture. His technical facility in verse was already almost as highly developed as it ever came to be. His inventive faculty worked freely and copiously within its lyrical limits, and in his soul there was all that mystical transcendentalism urgent to see what it could make of itself with due concentration of spirit and effort. He had already, also, a small circle of friends and admirers who were favoured with his poetic broadsheets and looked upon him as possibly to be one of the great names of his time in poetry. In that fourth floor flat in New York where they met of an evening and the talk was mostly of literature and art Peter McArthur describes him as sprawling gloriously in the one rocker the room had and reciting his poems to an audience which "vibrated to his rhythms". Peter in those early days was himself journalist, editor and poet, though after nearly twenty years of it, he finally gave up the Muses as a profession and returned to cultivate the natal farm. While there, however, he wrote some excellent prose sketches of farm life and local events, perhaps his best work. He was a year or two younger than Carman, and when they met in New York was greatly impressed by what he saw to be new in Carman's style and imaginative range, and became a close friend and whole-hearted admirer to whom the other's words were as oracles. That is pretty much McArthur's own account of their relations. To such a friend Carman would naturally let himself go freely in discourse. "Busy!", the greater poet once replied to

the lesser, "Why should I be busy when I have the rest of time, and all Eternity, ahead of me?" A hierophantic utterance which honest McArthur, certainly more familiar with the Scriptural wisdom of "work while it is day", accepts with the meekness of the acolyte. Roberts, I suspect, would have promptly answered "Bunk". But it was quite in the vein of the extravaganza and paradox of that period. "*C'était le bon temps*", as the great Anatole, speaking of the vagaries of the young symbolists, remarks, "*Le temps ou nous n'avions pas le sens commun*". Of course McArthur speaks of "glorious talks" they had together, and of "splendid silences", the latter had become inevitable since those solemn vespers Carlyle and Tennyson once held together. But his reports of the talks are very meagre, consisting mainly of one mystical metaphysical ebullition from Carman in defence, apparently, of the new poetic symbolism. Said Carman:

> I often wish that I could rid the world of the tyranny of facts. What are facts but compromises? A fact merely marks the point where we have agreed to let investigation cease. Investigate further and your fact disappears. Under the scrutiny of thought all facts are alike, from the atom to the universe,—merely compromises or splendid guesses,—and they dissolve even as
>
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all that it inherit, shall dissolve.
>
> And it is only after facts have dissolved and vanished into the mystery of things that the poetic soul can begin to recreate and devise forms of beauty.

The report is not perhaps meant to be verbally accurate but only an echo of many such utterances. Peter is not

quite a first-class reporter in that line, and in his sketch of the poet has mixed in traits from Roberts and D. C. Scott with the idea of making it more interesting; very incongruous ones too. Fancy the impecunious Carman pictured as walking the streets of London and dispensing alms on every hand like a Grand Almoner! [1] But for all that, the passage on fact and poetry is interesting as expressing probably fairly enough the ideal of poetry which the poet of *Low Tide on Grand Pré* had in his mind. It is evidently something akin to the doctrines then current in the symbolist and mystical schools of poetry. The English-speaking world knows them best now, I think, in the accounts of Mallarmé's theories or in the fine persuasiveness of Mr. Yeats's essays in defence of symbolism in art.

Carman had now some good journalistic connections in New York to help him in his poetic career, and magazine editors there are fairly liberal and ready to give young poets a chance. Indeed the ten or twenty dollars he got for a lyric in this way seems to have been his chief support for many a day. But he was quite prepared —a good disciple of Emerson and Whitman in this respect—to bear the traditional hardships of a poet's career and to sacrifice many things men consider the prizes of life. He did not care about wealth or social position, nor even, his cousin the poet Roberts said to me, for fame. That is easy to say, but no doubt he was ready to say good-bye to the things that did not prove to be on the

[1] McArthur's sketch ("On Having Known a Poet") is in the *Atlantic Monthly* for May, 1906.

road he had chosen. He wanted to live his life fully as he understood it.

The Grand Pré volume is a selection from the lyrics he had been writing during the last few years and contains only those which he considered to be similar enough in tone to form a homogeneous collection. It does not have his early ballads, but that type of poem which reflects Poe's methods and interests by its mystical suggestion is well represented. I have already noticed "Pulvis et Umbra", the "Gwendolen" poems, "Low Tide on Grand Pré", "A Northern Vigil", and "The Eavesdropper". Even his nature poetry in this volume, though there are vivid descriptive touches in it, serves less as scenic description than as a suggestion of a mystical penumbral environment of life. In the Spring songs which were to become so characteristic a feature of his poetry this became a more definite cosmic philosophy; the pulsation of human life is made one with the swell of sap and seed, the growth of plants, the migration of birds and the movements of wild animals. The awakening of nature in Spring becomes a wide mystical vision of a procession of all nature's creations following an irresistible cosmic call, including man who is to find in this impulse a hint of his true destiny and renew his life at the fountains of nature. As he puts it in "The Pensioners":—

> Until her April train goes by,
> And then because we are the kin
> Of every hill flower on the hill
> We must arise and walk therein.

Because her heart as our own heart,
Knowing the same wild upward stir,
Beats joyward by eternal laws,
We must arise and go with her;

As yet his feeling for nature has not reached that stage of formal theory but is more of an æsthetic ecstasy which gives him new contacts with it, a new form of receptivity. The cryptic delicacy of expression in "A Windflower" is an example. I do not mean the poet's dramatic identification of himself with the flower, which is only a happy rhetorical device, but the sympathetic penetration into the dumb, dimly divined reactions of flower life:

Between the roadside and the wood,
Between the dawning and the dew,
A tiny flower before the sun,
Ephemeral in time, I grew.
. . . . . .

But down my dayspan of the year
The feet of straying winds came by;
And all my trembling soul was thrilled
To follow one lost mountain cry.

And then my heart beat once and broke
To hear the sweeping rain forebode
Some ruin in the April world,
Between the woodside and the road.

But the chief interest of the volume for readers who like the mystical element in Carman's poetry may lie neither in its love idylls nor in its nature poetry, but in poems like "Wayfaring" and "On the Trail" in which his transcendental vision is concentrated on the interpretation of human effort and aspiration. It is the poetry of the quest, of the instinct which urges human life to reach

some satisfying consciousness of destiny in this endless trail and to do its part accordingly. In the "Wanderer" there is a sort of psychological survey of the development of this consciousness in man, very general of course and touching only on some high points in his spiritual history. Carman uses the symbolism of the four winds, East, South, West, and North, as a framework for his subject,—a favourite device of his in such surveys; winds of the spirit, of course, but still preserving a cosmical character as forces of nature. The wind of the East is the wind of the morning, the wind of the spirit which spoke there first in the bright dawn of the religious consciousness. It is apparently the voice of the soul speaking without definite language but persistent, eternal.

> For long ago, when the world was making,
> I walked through Eden with God for guide;
> And since that time in my heart forever
> His calm and wisdom and peace abide.
>
> I am thy spirit and thy familiar,
> Child of the teeming earth's unrest!
> Before God's joy upon gloom begot thee,
> I had hungered and searched and ended the quest.
>
> I sit by the roadside wells of knowledge;
> I haunt the streams of the springs of thought;
> But because my voice is the voice of silence,
> The heart within thee regardeth not.
>
> Yet I await thee, assured, unimpatient,
> Till thy small tumult of striving be past.
> How long, O Wanderer, wilt thou a-weary,
> Keep thee afar from my arms at the last?

The soft South wind of high noon speaks next. Its language seems at first to be urging the claims of the body,

of the senses, on the old ground, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die"; oblivion waits for all things:

> While the implacable warder, Oblivion,
> Sleeps on the marge of a foamless sea!
>
> Come where the urge of desire availeth,
> And no fear follows the children of men;
> For a handful of dust is the only heirloom
> The morrow bequeaths to its morrow again.

Ultimately, however, spirit and sense are to find reconcilement in some higher cult, combining the spiritual with the æsthetic:

> Therefore, O Wanderer, cease from desiring;
> Take the wide province of seaway and sun!
> Here for the infinite quench of thy craving,
> Infinite yearning and bliss are one.

The West wind of evening then speaks representing apparently the later creative energy of Western civilization. The names of its great doers are invoked,

> Olaf and Alaric
> Bruce or Cæsar or Charlemagne,
> . . . . . .
>
> Let loose the conquering toiler within thee;
> Know the large rapture of deeds begun!
> The joy of the hand that hews for beauty
> Is the dearest solace beneath the sun.

The style there is not always free from a commonplace kind of inflation, but one may notice a new influence coming into it, that of Browning with his optimistic vigour and bounding dactylics. The North wind represents the spiritual influences of Northern nature. There

is a special reference to Canada, "the tender dear dark land of the snow", for the poem here takes an autobiographical turn, the poet's own experience serving as a type of the mystical fostering that the spiritual consciousness receives from the environment of nature. The conclusion is that in spite of the temporary triumphs of deflecting tendencies like "The lust of the mind and the lure of the eye", and the seductions of worldly ambition —in short, of the lust of the eye and the pride of life, the dream of the heart will realize itself in the end.

> Therefore is joy more than sorrow, foreseeing
> The lust of the mind and the lure of the eye
> And the pride of the hand have their hour of triumph,
> But the dream of the heart will endure by-and-by.

The poem, as you can see in these quotations, has a good range of philosophical reflection expressed with a fluent charm of style. The large symbolistic phrase of which Carman has such easy command is at times quite fascinating in its reach.

> Take the wide province of seaway and sun

seems to add the sanction of nature herself to the old logic of *Gaudeamus Igitur*. There is a piquant originality characteristic of Carman in the way the Wanderer assembles and presents ideas which are not very novel in themselves. It is a new way of saying things at least, if not of looking at them, though it may tend towards a euphuistic inflation of the style too much:

> Here where they come of the habit immortal,
> By the open road to the land of the Name, . . .

"The End of the Trail" is autobiography of this transcendental symbolistic kind. The poet conceives himself as an Arcadian wanderer seeking the elusive trail amongst the lonely Ardise hills where he first had the vision of it. He commences in a strain of transcendental hyperbole addressed to Lenore, but passes after a while into sincerer tones.

> The plane at Martock lies and drinks
> The long Septembral gaze of blue;
> The royal leisure of the hills
> Hath wayward reveries of you.

All the beauties of nature are re-echoed in her charms; Carman always sows with the basket, not with the hand.

> The goblins of the Ardise hills
> Can horde no treasure like your hair.
> . . . . . .
> No sound nor echo of the sea
> But hath tradition of your voice.
> . . . . . .
> No gleam in all the russet hills
> But wears the solace of your smile.

The stanzas which recall his native Canadian scenery have a fine kind of pathos in their music:

> Because I am a wanderer
> Upon the roads of endless quest,
> Between the hill-wind and the hills,
> Along the margin men call rest.
>
> Because there lies upon my lips
> A whisper of the wind at morn,
> A murmur of the rolling sea
> Cradling the land where I was born;

Because its sleepless tides and storms
Are in my heart for memory
And music, and its gray-green hills
Run white to bear me company;

The poem is highly sentimental. With the green melancholy of romantic youth Carman sees his life in beautiful and almost tragic pathos and has even an imaginative vision of it nearing its end amidst fateful signs and calls like that of old Oedipus at Colonus:

Until, some hazy autumn day,
With yellow evening in the skies
And rime upon the tawny hills,
The far blue signal smoke shall rise,

To tell my scouting foresters
Have heard the clarions of rest
Bugling, along the outer sea,
The end of failure and of quest.

An excess of sentimentality, perhaps, but softly cased in transcendental metaphor. There may be critics who have asked what the "scouting foresters" and the "outer sea" mean. The lure of the romantic mystical phrase which reaches beyond definable horizons or the "circumscription of space" and time is irresistible for Carman at this period, but often when it is the expression of his cosmic conception of nature, its vague symbolism has the advantage of being attached to a definite system of thought, generally to that transcendental cult of nature familiar to the American in Emerson and Thoreau. The latter speaks of himself in *Walden* as "trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and carry it express", and as "waiting at evening on the hill-tops for the sky to fall; that I

might catch something". And Thoreau even taught the free use of ecstatic speech in a more unguarded way than Emerson, his master. He writes:

> It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make that you shall speak so that they can understand you. . . . As if nature could support but one order of understandings. . . . I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be extravagant enough—may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. . . . I desire to speak somewhere *without* bounds; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression.

It was mostly only a theoretic ideal in the logical and observant Thoreau, but Whitman carried it out boldly in his original Chants. And here is Carman, a generation later, following the high call in fearlessly transcendental and elusive phrase:

> The sleepless guide to that outland
> Is the great Mother of us all,
> Whose moulded dust and dew we are
> With the blown flowers by the wall.
>
> Girt with the twilight she is grave,
> The strong companion, wise and free;
> She leads beyond the dales of time,
> The earldom of the calling sea—
>
> Beyond these dull green miles of dike,
> And gleaming breakers of the bar—
> To the white kingdom of her lord,
> The nameless Word, whose breath we are.
> . . . . . .
> She knows the morning ways whereon
> The windflowers and the wind confer;
> Surely there is not any fear
> Upon the farthest trail with her!

In much of his poetry, especially the poetry of his earlier period, the mystical gleam and reach of his style seeks to carry the thought beyond logical bounds and make itself the organ of mystical intuition. The symbolism in this early poetry of the quest and the endless trail is made attractive by Carman's great command of a transcendental style of expression which is full of romantic suggestion. Nobody can reach those indefinite horizons which lie just a little outside of space and time or of logical definition with more melodious ease than he can:

> Through leagues of bloom I went with Spring
> To call you on the slopes of morn—

It is a style which lifts successfully the phrase and sentiment of the old romantic school into a new region of transcendental impressionism.

The essential character of Carman's poetic gift shows itself clearly enough in this early volume. In his later work there are new notes of course, and the vague romanticism and visionary elevation of his first songs become a closer reflection of his real experience. But the form of vision which gives him wings does not change. It is always a transcendental exaltation of experience, often a little mystical yet always trying to maintain itself on a foundation of rational thought. The great question for him was to find a supreme expression for this transcendental form of vision, an embodiment of it significant enough perhaps to stand as a new poetic interpretation of life. Whatever lighter moods and impulses may draw him aside at times, he never quite loses sight of that

ideal. His poetry, regarded as a whole, is a long series of efforts and experiments to realize it.

But the manner of realizing it had its problems. For various reasons Carman's poetic development was little affected by the new modernist movements which were stirring the literary world in Europe when he began to write. Poetry and æsthetic literature there were in a fermentation of new impulses and critical theories all seeking some form of escape from traditional standards and limits. The new naturalism of the novel in Zola and his school, the new criticism of life in the social drama of Ibsen, the new realism and technique of the Russian novelists, the new poetry of the French symbolists, the revolt of the French free-versists against the conventions of prosody, Carman felt in a general way the call of a new time in all that and was not at all unsympathetic with its new spirit of adventure, but there was much in its particular manifestations which he disliked. Indeed he never showed much critical interest in that continental literature, and was perhaps not a little influenced by Whitman's creed—it was Emerson's also in a milder form—that American literature and art should be an independent growth developing itself from its own instincts and resources. A decade was to pass before these European movements began to have their repercussions and counterparts in American letters. It was still a kind of slack water there between two tides, the ebb of the Transcendental movement.

What Carman knew best were the forms which the new spirit was taking amongst the English modernists,

and he did not find much there, in the effervescence of the nineties, that was to his liking or could be much of a light to him on his road. He admired, envied indeed as I could see from his tone, the fine workmanship and perfect finish of the English schools, the new delicacy of phrase and rhythm in Lionel Johnson, Yeats and others, and Henley's vigour and dexterous handling of free verse. The mystical sense of nature too in the Celtic school was the expression of a temperament very like his own, but much of its charm lay in a poetic nostalgia and revival of primitive lore that could be no constructive forces in the world in which Carman lived. Nostalgia of the past in any form has become spiritual discord to the American mind. But the outstanding tendencies of the nineties seemed to him to savour strongly of decadence and pessimism. He did not live near enough to the half-artificial enthusiasm and reactions generated in old world centres to get their fever. The new æsthetic cult which Wilde had come over to the States to propagate, thought more of the decorative values of art than of its higher service to humanity; the brilliant artistry of the Yellow Book School and similar writers was too unsubstantial to live with, too fond of the glitter of paradox and the high fantastical in its themes. Their psychological interest in diseases of the soul and their exquisite confessions of satiety and failure in life had the morbid flavour of the Decadence. It was mostly the work of literary and artistic coteries whose originality took forms of sensational and paradoxical revolt that did not represent, Carman felt, either the permanent thought

and temper of the nation, or the promise of that great new constructive literature which Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau had been calling for as the spiritual need of the time. It was mainly in fact a revolt against the literary and artistic tradition of the great Victorians, the æsthetic's dislike of their use of moral standards in art, the mystic's distaste for their firm rationalism and, in graver thinkers like Hardy and Davidson, a philosophic doubt of their moral optimism or a scientific distrust of their transcendental way of interpreting human history and the universe.

All that was at work in the tendency to escape from the supremely powerful expression of Protestant culture which Victorian literature and art had been. But for a time the process was a dissolving and disillusioning one. It might be effective as a breaking of the soil for new seeding, but its creative impulses—except perhaps in the matter of decorative art where Victorian work had been weak—were not of the kind that become strongly or greatly constructive. Certainly its achievements could not compare with the magnificent construction and powerful art of the older literature from Wordsworth to Carlyle and Browning. To a healthy-minded young Canadian like Carman, with the breath of free Canadian wilds in his blood and cherishing that priestly conception of literature characteristic of the great Victorian and New England writers, the whole *fin de siècle* fermentation seemed a wayward and almost freakish revolt. Even at the beginning of the new century he still looks with suspicion on the "new movements" as representing

mainly a literature of pessimism and dissolution without grandeur of horizon or hope for humanity:

> New art, new movements, and new schools,
> All maimed and blind and halt.

That is from a poem ("A Spring Feeling") which is half playful in its satire, but it represents truly enough his feeling that there was something hectic and unhealthy in much of the experimental and revolutionary ardour of the period. It was a feeling shared by many who missed the soothing tones of Victorian literature and its ways of reconciling the spiritual and the natural too deeply to recognize how much romantic illusion and conventional sentiment the new time was struggling to get rid of. Carman had too little sympathy with the sceptical element in literature to profit by it or to feel its value in deepening idealistic construction. He underrated the significance of developments like the social drama of Ibsen, whose criticism of life was not so bitterly dissolvent as he thought, but had pregnant germs in it of a new idealism. And the new movements in France in spite of their excesses had also their significance for the future of poetry. The intensity of the effort there to extend the horizon of poetic vision was leading to a new conception of poetry and poetic art. Its claims, it is true, were debatable and much contested even in France, and although his friend Hovey had translated some of Mallarmé's poems Carman found little to attract him in the obscure and esoteric productions of the new schools. The mystical intensification of experience which was re-

placing the old romanticism was something he had in common with them, but in the French poets it was mainly an impartial intellectual curiosity in the cosmos and the recondite workings of sub-conscious association, rather rigorous and subtle in its procedure and deliberately secretive in its manner of expressing itself. The psychological severity of *la poésie pure* was essentially different from Carman's manner of transcendentalizing his experience instead of exploring it psychologically. As for the experiments of the French free-versists in broken and uneven metres and prose forms of poetry, they were not likely, even though Whitman had led the way here, to be much in favour with a poet like Carman who loved a singing rhythm and cadences that reached the heart without the need of too much interpretation from the head. Everything in Carman's training and temperament tended to attach him to the older tradition in literature as the greater and sounder, especially to that form of thought and vision distinctive of the New England transcendentalists. That was still the highest tradition in American letters and stood in close relationship to the spiritual faith and teaching of the great Victorians. The constructive thought in Carman's poetry is an endeavour to develop in new poetic forms the philosophical transcendentalism by which both had sought to reconcile the spirit to the nature of the universe and the general history of the race. Even his style and methods of composition when they have most individuality show a respect for the standards of the older literature.

II

BEHIND THE ARRAS

In 1895 Carman published *Behind the Arras: A Book of the Unseen.* The two principal poems in the volume, "Behind the Arras" and "Beyond the Gamut" are a metaphysic in verse almost systematically complete in its way and genially illustrated by poetic allegory and metaphor. It was natural enough that Carman should be trying to find a philosophic groundwork for the transcendental ideas floating loosely around in his early poetry, though it is not so usual for a poet to venture on a formal philosophical exposition of them. But it was one way of developing them, and the philosophic form of thought had now made its way deeply enough into the general culture to be creating a new kind of poetic vision and forming a public for it. Carman's fundamental idea, that of a Power underlying all the manifestations of life and revealing a benevolent will in its manner of awakening spiritual questioning and hope in the spirit of man and in the generous way in which beauty and joy are distributed throughout the universe, is of course common to all the optimistic systems of thought. The only room for distinction is that there may be something original and convincing in the poet's way of supporting and illus-

trating that faith. In general the poet does that simply by his way of representing life, but Carman combines with that a more formally logical procedure. As these manifestations of the infinite Power have obviously conflicting and contradictory aspects, on the surface at least, he takes up the whole task of metaphysic to reduce the significance of evil or loss in the world. Of course there are logical difficulties here which are very inadequately treated in Carman's two poems, but if the philosophical demonstration has evident defects, there is still a genuine poetic residue displaying the æsthetic plentitude of life as an argument that all this high music of humanity must involve a further destiny. It is Browning's thesis and procedure in the main supported by a sort of Spinozistic logic of the Infinite and its attributes.

"Behind the Arras", the title poem, begins with a genially conceived allegory of the soul in its house of life, as the habitant of a visible but circumscribed world into which intimations of a great invisible reality penetrate with impressive power but are of uncertain significance. The soul knows its house well enough, but it is from these obscure intimations in its own experience and from some traditions and reports of such, preserved in the mansion's furnishings, that it has to divine the meaning of its life. The opening lines are excellent, in light familiar tone but with touches of style and imagery which hint effectively at the mystery:

> I like the old house tolerably well,
> Where I must dwell

Like a familiar gnome;
And yet I never shall feel quite at home:
I love to roam.

. . . . . .

So many treasures lure
The curious mind.

. . . . . .

There at the window many a time of year,
Strange faces peer,
Solemn though not unkind,
Their wits in search of something left behind
Time out of mind;

As if they once had lived here, and stole back
To the window crack
For a peep which seems to say,
"Good fortune, brother, in your house of clay!"
And then, "Good day!"

I hear their footsteps on the gravel walk,
Their scraps of talk,
And hurrying after, reach
Only the crazy sea-drone of the beach
In endless speech.

That is very fine allegory, the metaphors suggesting with curious delicacy the half-spoken messages and guesses about human destiny that live in the literature and monuments of the race. The style too is different from the softer elegiac strain of the Grand Pré volume. The mould is more that of Browning with his crisp, brisk phrase and favourite metrical device of a long recitative line in sharp collision with a short one.

Of course an allegory of this comprehensive kind is not likely to go far without getting into some logical trouble. He can find no other way of representing the actual movements of life than by supposing them to be

figured on the arras, "woven to the life". The arras in this way represents the psychological isolation of the ego over against the world-curtain of appearances. And the allegory begins to wear thin as the poem goes on to describe the experiences of the soul in a world of reality and the way in which scenes change there under winds of the spirit that come none knows whence.

> It is the world-ghost, the time-spirit, come
> None knows where from,
> The viewless draughty tide
> And wash of being. I hear it yaw and glide,
> And then subside,
> . . . . . .
> And when I start and challenge, "Who goes there?"
> It answers, "Where?"

And now the poet begins to speculate on the character of the Power that works behind this metaphysical curtain. What if He, or It, be purposeless, an indifferent No-man's friend? What if he be an "arch-delusion", whose imposture one might pierce with one good Hamlet-like lunge through the arras. The evidence on this point seems at first to be mixed and contradictory. What grim and grotesque pranks are wrought by him in this old house of life. Gibberings and demoniacal cries are heard in it. But also one hears such mild solacing breathings. What heavenly music, for example, this "veiled mysteriarch" plays on the old Æolian harp that swings in the house! That last is an ingenious tribute to Aeolic song and all that descends from it, but is also extended by Carman in his easy way to include the gentle breath and blossoming of spring. It is in this value of the

Cosmos for the æsthetic sense that the poet finds reassurance as to the benevolent character of the inscrutable Power. Such music must be, he reasons, "the sacrament of love". Is not rhythm itself begotten by Him out of the womb of silence? And at this point the poet introduces the dread "mysteriarch" himself singing the metaphysical mystery of his manifestation in rhythm. His song begins with an apology for the existence of ruin in the universe, and closes with his assurance that death is but an euthanasia, another form of birth or creation attended by similar or comparable "agonies of bliss". It is a fair example of Carman's æsthetic metaphysic, fine intuitions that seem to cast some light into the abyss, along with a logic that hides its gaps in poetic diction:

> Though my wild way may ruin what it bends,
> It makes amends
>
> To the frail downy clocks,
> Telling their seed a secret that unlocks
> The granite rocks.
>
> The womb of silence to the crave of sound
> Is heaven unfound,
> Till I, to soothe and slake
> Being's most utter and imperious ache,
> Bid rhythm awake.
>
> If with such agonies of bliss, my kin,
> I enter in
> Your prison-house of sense,
> With what a joyous freed intelligence
> I shall go hence.

That is the turning point in the logical movement of the poem. In the existence of this rhythm, this music of

the universe, the poet finds a sufficient warrant for faith and glad acquiescence in life—The reality behind the arras must be an infinitely wise and benevolent one.

> I need no more to guess the weaver's name,
> Nor ask his aim,

Men and women are but his dream, rhythmic patterns in that rich design, as all things are, each rising into being in its due time and returning in due time to its source.

> A cadence dying down unto its source
> In music's course;

As to the character of the music, Carman has no doubt. It is harmony throughout with just enough doubt or discord in it to make us appreciate the harmony.

But Carman's philosophical survey does not stop at this Spinozistic idea of human life sinking into the ocean of its source, it concludes with something which might hint at the Oriental doctrine of recurrence of the individual's existence which the great Walt also liked to toy with; though it might be little more than the common faith that man is always growing better:

> To be through thousand springs restored, renewed,
> With love imbrued,
> With increments of will
> Made strong, perceiving unattainment still
> From each new skill.

This progress is not a general cosmic evolution, however, but confined to man, the inferior forms of creation being regarded as already perfect in their kind and therefore incapable of progress, while man, as in Browning's

"Cleon," just because he is an imperfect and even illogical creation, has a right to a farther destiny. The last word of the poem, however, is almost inconsistently cryptic:

> Some quiet April evening soft and strange,
> When comes the change
> No spirit can deplore,
> I shall be one with all I was before,
> In death once more.

These lines remind one of the answer Epicurus gave, as Cicero tells us, to one who asked him where he thought he would be after death:—"Where I was before birth", the sage replied discreetly.

"Behind the Arras" is Carman's greatest effort in this philosophical species of poetry. The allegory is brilliantly sustained in its first movement, but it soon encounters difficulties in the wide expansion Carman has given it and tends as an allegory to fade away into a freer movement of thought. One could conceive the first part modelled into a fine artistic whole by itself. He has fine intuitions and a touch full of tact in idealistic philosophy, with something also of the mystic in him that is always tempting him to cross the border. But the mystical element in his poetry is not independently developed; it is only the penumbra of his transcendental philosophy, not the idiosyncratic vision of a Blake or Swedenborg, not the rigid abstractness of the Oriental mystic for whom phenomena are but the deceptive veil of the Infinite, nor even that of the modern psychological poet who finds his new conceptions of reality in the ob-

scure sub-conscious cistern from which consciousness emerges. Carman is the pure transcendentalist for whom the Eternal and its manifestations have equal yet distinct reality, and he is a poet with a passion for the clear sensuous image. Hence the symbolical allegory is his favourite form. He is the disciple of Browning here and has something of that master's art of weaving a philosophical theory into a human drama. The form of monologue which the genius of Browning evolved had something inevitable about it as a vehicle for the expression of the critical modern spirit; it combined psychological analysis with the full contours of art, at least in the great monologues of his middle period. And as these were always the expression of a triumphant optimism and a transcendental vision of human destiny, Browning's form had an irresistible seduction for Carman when he wanted to demonstrate poetically the same views.

The monologue of reasoned or philosophical discourse in particular is highly congenial to his imaginative faculty and the qualities of his style. Its intimate confessional tones, its dramatic breaks and arrests, its second thoughts and unexpected returns, its way of rising from free familiar turns of speech into majestic curves of style and rhythm when the swell of thought makes it natural; for all that Carman has a natural gift. And he is very much at home too in those brilliant casual descriptive bits and piquant asides with which Browing enlivens a philosophical theme. In "Beyond the Gamut" Carman gives us a monologue in this more lively dramatic style. It develops further with special illustrations from the art

of music the idea of the divine rhythm in the universe. The conception of the poem is not altogether original. The fundamental idea is that in Browning's "Abt Vogler" and the *mise en scène* is similar to that in his "Toccata of Galuppi." A dead *mæstro* in music, Nicollo Amati, is apostrophized and questioned as if in colloquy, as to the meaning of his art. There are some very poetic blendings of religious feeling with the conceptions of modern science, that of evolution in particular. The possibilities in man are not to be gauged by his present capacities, the poet argues, he—

> may still develop
> Unknown senses in life's larger room.
>
> Superhuman is not supernatural,
> How should half-way judge of journey done?
> Shall this germ and protoplast of being
> Rest mid-life and say his race is run?

That is, in a future or continued existence, for Carman goes on to develop the idea that the soul's capacity for fulness of life hereafter depends on its cultivation of that capacity here on earth. Even if the relation between the use of the senses here and in a future life is not conceivable, he thinks there is something stored up from this life for a new form of existence. Therefore he preaches boldly an aesthetic hedonism which should make the best of both existences:

> Ah, drink deep and let the parching morrow
> Quench what thirst its newer needs may bring!
> Slake the senses now, that soul hereafter
> Go not forth a starved defrauded thing.

Accordingly he gives us an ideal of individual development comphehensive enough to have made a Goethe gasp. "He is most man", he says, "who can respond to most calls", who can "follow when the skirling pipes bid forward", or "lie and gaze for hours into the blue", who would have gone with Alexander to conquer the East and watched "with Buddha in the shadow of the Bo tree", who can "lose himself in Shakespeare's pages" and "dare the unknown with Blake and Galileo". Buddha and Alexander, Blake and Galileo, and the forlorn hope make a large stretch of energies and affinities for one human soul. In reading such lines or those which illustrate so fancifully the corespondence between sounds and colours throughout the universe—an idea Baudelaire and the Symbolists played with a little—one feels that Carman's idealizing fancy is too little under the control of reason.

In accounting for the existence of evil or discord in the divine harmony of the world, he takes the safer line of giving us an eclectic variety of solutions from different systems of thought. First, the optimism of social progress:

> Hate is discord lessening through the ages;

Then the metaphysical reduction combines with the other:

> Evil is a dissonance, not a discord,
> Soon to be resolved into a happier phrase, . . .

I suppose that means something like the Spinoza-Royce solution, "evil is nothing positive, only a deprivation". Carman then adds the teleological explanation that evil has been "from time immemorial permitted" (a terribly

negligent phrase) as the foil necessary to make us appreciate the good. As Abt Vogler sings:

> Why rushed the discords in but that harmony might be prized

And as a last alternative Carman gives us the explanation, from the gnostic philosophy of the East: "the mere bungling" of his hand "who made the planets poise"; but in any case, he adds, it is negligible, "an unthinkably small thing, Amati, like the fraying of your 'Ess-string one touch destroys' ", or the slight oscillation the sea-gull makes in his flight.

> Evil the mere eddy from his wing-sweep,
> Good the morning path he must pursue.

I shall not follow Carman's philosophical discourse further. Its substance has already been given, namely, that evil and deformity in the world are negligible in its general harmony, and in any case fated to disappear in a new life of the soul in the Absolute or in some advanced form of existence. His poem depends very much upon a formal logic of analogy which does not quite bridge the chasm between the known and the unknown. We may accept much as the direct expression of poetic intuition, the burning message of inspiration, which nevertheless becomes a challenge to reason when it appears as a logical argument. Poetry may express aspects of truth in a fragmentary way because it does not have to show their place in a philosophical system. Carman's thinking here is alert and eclectical, quick to seize on whatever suits it, but it is not fundamentally unified. It wavers between a poetic pantheism, a mystical conception of the con-

tinuity of all life, a metaphysical idea of a perfect Absolute or *ens realissimum*, and the orthodox idea of a benevolent creator. He can speak of the destiny of man and all "his half-accomplished fellows" as being beyond a world of sense "through unfrontiered provinces to range", or as "sunk in the tranquillity of God"; he can speak of God permitting evil in his "unfinished opus" for a wise purpose, or he may tell us that man is—but his verses are too good not to quote:

> Man is but the morning dream of nature
> Roused by some wild cadence weird and strange.

That is, man is a product of the blind-working forces of nature. There is poetry there, the power of expression which stirs and charms the imagination, and the kind of truth which is floating loose amongst the systematized areas of thought, what our new theology calls the feeling for values, or what our younger critics call the truth of "emotional recognition". But the Sphinx smiles her very old smile. Poets have their own way, of course, of avoiding the grand antinomies that embarrass a Leibnitz or a Kant, and Carman's form in those two metaphysical poems brings them into full view.

There is always a big leap—a *salto mortale*—to be made in passing from the finite to the infinite. Kant's thought that the existence of a moral will involves *the idea* at least of God and immortality has its solidity, though that stringent reasoner will not make the leap formally. The world as it is may be best justified as an æsthetic phenomenon, but the æsthetic argument does not

make so strong a spring-board for the leap beyond. The æsthetic sense may have led man on, as Schiller argues, to forms of thought that overcome the existence of evil in the world and make an euthanasia of death, but to the æsthetic sense itself deformity is always deformity, even if it manages to reclaim a little ground for art in that region. It has to seek very deep forms now to get beyond the new realism which has been poured into world-thought with such power of statement by the most representative literature of the age. The Russian novel, the drama of Ibsen and Strindberg and Hauptmann, the naturalism of the new French social drama and novel, the merciless irony of Anatole France, the later novel and lyric of Hardy and much else of that kind have to be assimilated and so overcome by any optimism that could now count. It is not possible to treat the music of the universe as a clear Verdi melody, but as something so full of discords for human feeling that its harmony is difficult to represent except in the form of tragic pathos and beauty which has always been the major note of the great poets from Sophocles to Goethe. Social and economic conditions are not so essential in the question, not so decisive at any rate, as some think. On one side we have the common form of optimism which expects salvation from the transformation of a dumb toiler like Millet's "Man with the Hoe" into a smart member of the American Federation of Labor, who has electric lights in his house, and possibly reads modern speculation on the fourth dimension and ectogenesis in the Sunday editions. On the other we have interesting mystics like W.

B. Yeats to whom an illiterate and ill-clad peasant by the bogs of Wicklow or Connemara, with his heritage of fairy-lore and legend, seems to be nearer a vital form of truth and happiness than the more sophisticated artisan or the educated bourgeois; or Maurice Maeterlinck who can see in the drowsing passivity of an old man seated in his arm-chair and thinking of nothing in particular, *écoutant sans le savoir . . . . subissant la présence de son âme*, the type of profoundest contact with the essence of life. There is a touch of *blague* no doubt at times in those two charming writers and their way of challenging common optimism, while Edwin Markham's poem is entirely meant. Perhaps Walt Whitman in his wild way tried to find the Word of life for a new democracy, more seriously than any of them, an idea which might be universally human, and in his Democratic Chants made fearless descents into strange depths for it.

Carman's optimism does not descend into any new and doubtful depths for its ideal. The normal values of life keep their place in his æsthetic philosophy. And he has certainly very piquant and poetic ways of presenting it. In "The Lodger", for example, he uses the allegory of a recluse musician of marvellous talent, who keeps his own room, rarely showing himself, though his music, sometimes sweet and soothing, sometimes weird and solemn, is the delight of his fellow lodger;

> Outlandish certainly
> He is—and queer!
> He has been lodged with me
> This thirty year;

All the while (it seems absurd!)
We hardly have
Exchanged a single word.
Mum as the grave.
. . . . . .
An anarchist, say some;
But tush, say I,
When a man's heart is plumb,
Can his life be awry?

What follows is an allegory of the soul's higher æsthetic life. The field of illustration of course is immense and Carman travels in spiritual luxury through a great variety of æsthetic experiences in describing the effects wrought by the hidden *mæstro* on his violin, sunshine on the summer sea, the radiance of spring, the migrations of birds and herds, winter sights in town, battle music and muffled drums, solemn midnights, visionary gleams from art and song, dreams of the past, et cetera.

All this his fiddle plays,
. . . . . .
He calls and they come, leaving strife,
Leaving discord and death,
Out of oblivion to life,
Though its span be a breath.

There they are, all the beautiful things
I loved and lost sight of
Long since in the far-away springs,
Come back for a night of

Now being as good as their old,
Aye, better in fact,
For somehow he gilds their fine gold,—
Gives the one thing they lacked,
. . . . . .
The touch of man's soul.

There are some ten or twelve stanzas in "The Lodger", which express with mystical exaltation the idea of a great sea of æsthetic harmony where the soul of musical and poetic genius questingly wings its way.

> Luminous radiant sea
> Of the sounds and time,
> Surely, surely by thee
> Is eternal prime.
>
> Holy and beautiful deep,
> Spread down before
> The imperial coming of sleep,
> Endure, endure!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Then wings of the sun, go abroad
> As a scarlet desire,
> Unwearied, unwaning, unawed,
> To quest and aspire,
>
> Till the drench of the dusk you drink
> In the poppy-field west;
> Then veer and settle and sink
> As a gull to her nest.

The poet has not embarrassed himself in this case by indicating the metaphysical status of his idea. It might be something like Plato's sphere of higher being he has in his mind here, a form of existence which Mr. Santayana derides as a purely "imaginary store of substance in the world at large". But even if it meant nothing more than old John Milton's "cherub Contemplation" as he soars on golden wings, it is a fine example of our poet's lyrical exaltation and has its value as an æsthetic justification of existence. The allegory is piquant and is brilliantly carried out in parts, but as often in Carman is

excessively drawn out, loaded to the gunwale with illustration. Half the number of its ninety stanzas would have given a better chance to what is best in it.

Carman's talent for allegory is a brilliant part of his poetic equipment; his fancy plays with natural freedom in that form, as one may see in the fine precision of his symbols and a style that is full of happy surprises. Here is a little piece of six stanzas, "In The Wings", in which the old idea that life is a play with the world for stage gets a very original turn. The actor would like to believe this part he is playing is heroic or at any rate serious in meaning. But often a haunting doubt comes over him, he seems to hear derisive laughter from some one in the wings. Well, when his exit comes he will see:

> I fear that when my Exit comes,
> I shall encounter there,
> Stronger than fate, or time, or love,
> And sterner than despair,
>
> The Final Critic of the craft
> As stage tradition tells;
> And yet—perhaps 't will only be
> The jester with his bells.

Will it be Rhadamanthine valuation of one's performance, or—life's supreme illusion? Carman's satirical and sceptical humour, generally smothered in his philosophical idealism makes a momentary escape there.

III

SONGS FROM VAGABONDIA

Unfortunately, *Behind the Arras* had a very limited sale. Its philosophical poetry had the very mixed character common in Carman's work, piquant allegory and brilliant illustration, and a large amplitude of synthesis which had more novelty in its manner of assembling its material and ideas than strictness in organizing them. But if it did not win for him the fame of a Magus who has brought a new form of vision into the world, it was a new and lively expression of the philosophical romanticism of the 19th century. And he had satisfied his higher instincts in writing it; it was there to show what he was trying to do as a poet. In the meantime he had not been unmindful of a public that wants lighter fare. In 1894 the first volume of the *Songs from Vagabondia* was published. It was written in collaboration with Richard Hovey, an American poet of nearly his own age, and reflects mostly the lighter, gayer side which life may also have for Bohemian poets and artists of five and twenty. Gay love lyrics, rollicking tavern songs, summer vagrancies and adventures, humorous and satirical verse are mingled with some graver tones and flights into the higher symbolism. The temper-

amental contrast between the two veins of poetry in Carman is almost great enough to raise the question as to which of the two is his more natural note. Of course the poet's moods may vary like those of other men, but it is not usual for his tone and the mould of his imagination to alter so much. Still the contrast is not really so great as some of the lighter Vagabondia poems might suggest. There are graver compositions also which are just minor and more casual expressions of his cosmic idealism. It looks very much as if the Vagabondia volumes had been the final receptacle for the mass of lighter work, the contributions to magazines and periodicals by which the two poets supported themselves. They have a character of indiscriminate accumulation which contrasts with Carman's other publications. He had to make a living by his verses and the best way of reaching the public was in the pages of the popular monthlies and weeklies with their wide circulation and the liberal advertisement American editors are ready to give their contributors. For such work a lighter theme and less mystical style of treatment was called for; more normal human emotion and a tone that made a stronger appeal to the ordinary temperament. There was nothing in this call that was embarrassing or uncongenial to Carman. For though he was a transcendentalist and almost a mystic in his intellectual life, the lighter side of his temperament gave him plenty of contact with the normal instincts and tastes of human nature. Being poor and a poet and with nothing of the ascetic in him, he was naturally something of a Bohemian in spirit. When he

begins to picture the actual movement of life in his poems, he does it from the point of view of the spiritual Bohemian, with his jibe at the conventional standards of society and the engrossment of the business world in money making and material development. The idea of the spiritual vagrant footing it cheerfully through life with the blue sky or the stars overhead and all the natural riches of life, sensuous, æsthetic and intellectual, in his hands is natural enough in a philosophic mystic. And the tone of this Vagabondia poetry though it was originally meant to be a gay defiance of the social restraints that cramp human nature has little or nothing suggestive of fundamental moral revolt in it. A very conventional Bohemianism even, thinks an American critic, Mr. Louis Untermeyer, and asks to what end is all this freedom desired, as if it meant no more than an invitation to the waltz and not a call to inherit the earth in its spiritual fulness also. In Carman particularly it was often just a lighter form of the message of Emerson and the New England transcendentalists, who had begun to feel that some values of the individual life were getting lost in a social strenuousness that was giving new moral names to mean ambitions. Whitman, no doubt, with his "free and afoot on the open road" and his "vagabondish disregard of social responsibilities" adds his note to these Vagabondia songs. Hovey in particular was a great admirer of Walt, and I have heard it said by one who ought to know that it was he who stirred the more mystically contemplative Carman to make this new venture. Carman, however, hesitated and spoke doubtfully when I

questioned him on the point; he no doubt felt that his treatment of the Vagabondia Song is mostly very distinct from Hovey's. In particular he has the delicacy of touch that lessens the distance between the vein of Vagabondia and the transcendental Emersonian ethics. But all the same it is noticeable that it is Hovey who calls the time in the opening poem of the first volume, and calls it, too, in a very frank Bohemian strain:

Off with the fetters
That chafe and restrain!
Off with the chain!
Here Art and letters
Music and wine,
And Myrtle and Wanda,
The winsome witches,
Blithely combine.
Here are true riches
Here is Golconda,
Here are the Indies,
Here we are free—
Free as the wind is,
Free as the sea,
Free!

Houp-là!

He was only about thirty, and thirty is mere youth now-a-days—for a poet at any rate. Carman follows the tune in his "The Joys of the Road" in his more delicate way, with a characteristic shyness of self-exposure. He is more the poet of nature than Hovey and puts an æsthetic joy in nature in the foreground of Vagabondia's delights. The style is light and graceful, a contrast in that way to Hovey's more boisterous note:

A vagrant's morning wide and blue,
In early fall, when the wind walks, too;

A shadowy highway cool and brown,
Alluring up and enticing down

From rippled water to dappled swamp,
. . . . . .
The outward eye, the quiet will,
And the striding heart from hill to hill;

The touches become more poignant when he gives us a portrait of Hovey as his comrade on the road. It is sharply drawn in fine dry-point style:

A keeper of silence eloquent,
Needy, yet royally well content,

Of the mettled breed, yet abhorring strife,
And full of the mellow juice of life,

A taster of wine, with an eye for a maid,
Never too bold, and never afraid,

Never heart-whole, and never heart-sick,
(These are the things I worship in Dick)

No fidget and no reformer, just
A calm observer of ought and must,
. . . . . .
Who never defers and never demands,
But, smiling, takes the world in his hands,—

The same light Bohemian tone is happily maintained in Carman's "The House of Idiedaily". The first two lines which are repeated as a refrain are a perfect hit in the simple naïve style:

Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily!

There were always throats to sing
Down the river banks with spring,
. . . . . .
Bobolincolns in the meadows,
Leisure in the purple shadows,

Till the poppies without number
Bowed their head in crimson slumber,

And the twilight came to cover
Every unreluctant lover.

Not a night but some brown maiden
Bettered all the dusk she strayed in,

While the roses in her hair
Bankrupted oblivion there,

Oh, but life went gaily, gaily,
In the house of Idiedaily.

It is little more than light rhyming but it captures the vision of a summer evening's idyll for us. But all that follows that, when the mouldy hostelry of The Barrow begins to push its ugly allegorical head into the idyll is an infelicitous change of atmosphere; and the final description of the steaming viands, jugs of sherry, et-cetera, in the house of Idiedaily, makes the poem an incongruous combination of something as delicate as a *fête champêtre* by Watteau, and something like a pot-house interior by an old Dutch master. Carman's compositions are often awkwardly put together, loose in their imaginative structure.

The poetry of nature is, of course, one of the finer elements in the ideal of Vagabondia. Carman's favourite theme here is the awakening of all nature to renewed

life. His "Spring Song" makes man a part of nature's life almost as if he were still *Homo sylvanus* or a mythical Faun of the woods, dependent on the seasons for the joy of existence. That is one of the poetic fictions of Vagabondia. Even Hovey, whose tastes I have heard lay much more in the direction of a comfortable limousine and other similar resources of civilization, sings gloriously of living in the drip of wet leaves in the forest and of climbing the wild trees for food. It was more of a reality, I think, in Carman whose enjoyment of wild nature was deeply rooted in youthful memories of the rocky headlands and wind-swept meadows and marshes of New Brunswick, and was, in this earlier period at any rate, the great stay of his life. In his poetry the spring surge of life in nature plays as divinely fateful a part as it did in the old Greek cult of Demeter and Kore. The "Spring Song" in this volume is remarkable for its wealth of sensuous feeling and fancy; it is full of verve with light, swift turns of phrase and a breathless, running rhythm that carries its load of illustration with ease.

Make me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir!
When thy flowery hand delivers
All the mountain-prisoned rivers,
And thy great heart beats and quivers
To revive the days that were,
Make me over, mother April,
When the sap begins to stir!

. . . . . .

Set me in the urge and tide-drift
Of the streaming hosts a-wing!
Breast of scarlet, throat of yellow,
Raucous challenge, wooings mellow—

Every migrant is my fellow,
Making northward with the spring.
Loose me in the urge and tide-drift
Of the streaming hosts a-wing!

Shrilling pipe or fluting whistle,
In the valleys come again;
Fife of frog and call of tree-toad,
All my brothers, five or three-toed,
With their revel no more vetoed,
Making music in the rain;
Shrilling pipe or fluting whistle,
In the valleys come again.
. . . . . .
Make me even (How do I know?)
Like my friend the gargoyle there;
It may be the heart within him
Swells that doltish hands should pin him
Fixed forever in mid-air.
Make me even sport for swallows,
Like the soaring gargoyle there!

It is a true poetic intoxication of the imagination. Even that very artistically carved bit of grotesque in the last stanza is as well placed as the antic gargoyle itself is amongst Gothic pinnacles and traceries. To close with, the poet gives us a finely modernized version of the classical dream of a golden age. Ease of living, the care-free existence, that is still its foundation; but Carman's transcendental phrase releases the spiritual possibilities in the dream better.

Let me taste the old immortal
Indolence of life once more;
Not recalling, not foreseeing,
Let the great slow joys of being
Well my heart through as of yore!

That carries us beyond the *mollia otia* of Ovid; though Dr. Johnson would have sniffed at the vagueness of "The great slow joys of being". The "Spring Song" is a very spirited poem, something of an extravaganza no doubt, but full of temperament, wit and a piquant fancy. Carman has always his own flavour, yet his lighter pieces have often a truer form of originality than his more ambitious poems. The data are more his own, not drawn from literary tradition, and the style is free from haunting reminiscences of the great masters.

In the Vagabondia volumes Carman often expresses his more serious thoughts in the form of didactic allegory. "The Mendicants" is a poetic sermon on the natural riches which life offers us, if we but knew how to use that wealth. We are like roadside beggars poorly clothed in the shreds and patches of old creeds and conventions. Only the "Vagabondish sons of God" have the true wisdom.

We are as mendicants who wait
Along the roadside in the sun.
Tatters of yesterday and shreds
Of morrow clothe us every one.
. . . . . .

Hopeless or witless! Not one heeds,
As lavish Time comes down the way
And tosses in the suppliant hat
One great new-minted gold To-day.
. . . . . .

But there be others, happier few,
The vagabondish sons of God,
Who know the by-ways and the flowers,
And care not how the world may plod.

They idle down the traffic lands,
And loiter through the woods with spring;
To them the glory of the earth
Is but to hear a bluebird sing.

In the "Captain of the Press Gang" the allegory is an invitation to the soul to come out of the prison-house of mean interests (the "tap-rooms" and slums of "this Black Port") and venture forth on the high seas of a better life.

Shipmate, leave the ghostly shadows,
Where thy boon companions throng!
We will put to sea together
Through the twilight with a song.
. . . . . .
Let thy cronies of the tavern
Keep their kisses bought with gold;
On the high seas there are regions
Where the heart is never old,

Where the great winds every morning
Sweep the sea-floor clean and white,
And upon the steel-blue arches
Burnish the great stars at night;
. . . . . .
On the shining yards of heaven
See a wider dawn unfurled. . . .
The eternal slaves of beauty
Are the masters of the world.

The allegory limps a little in that final sublimation of the subject, the æsthetic idea in the last two lines does not go very well with all that old naval furniture from Marryat in the early part. But take it as a whole it expresses vividly enough Vagabondia's higher mood, its protest against the way in which the calls and claims of

the social and business world involve the individual and cut him off from contact with healthful cosmic influences. His being becomes responsive only to the coarser messages of nature, the finer etheric currents have no passage to him. Nothing very original perhaps, but new and piquant illustration of an old theme.

The range of notes even in the first volume of Vagabondia songs is, we see, fairly wide. They are not merely, as *The New York Times* in a very favourable notice wrote of them, "merry pipings" with "not a line that was made in the sweat of the brow".

I have already noticed that there are times when the old lyrical music of Longfellow, whose poetry like Tennyson's had been a household treasure in all families, as no poetry is now, takes insidious possession of Carman. Its pathos is too tender and romantic to be the whole truth for the present age, and too obvious for its love of subtleties. Modernist criticism dismisses it as pious commonplace, and W. B. Yeats in one of his essays damns him as insufferably intelligible. Maybe; but there is a divine art in the pathos of his simple rhythms. Their pure tones haunt Carman's poetry furtively at times, perhaps often unconsciously, but in "The City in the Sea" he can hardly have been unaware of how closely he was following the simple style of Longfellow's moral allegory. The comparison of the sunken city and its faintly tolling bells to the vague intimations of the soul sounding peace and soothing amidst the wreckage of life is quite in the older poet's manner.

Once of old there stood a fabled city
By the Breton sea,
Towered and belled and flagged and wreathed and pennoned
For the pomp of Yule-tide revelry;
All its folk, adventurous, sea-daring,
Gay as gay could be.

. . . . . .

In my heart there is a sunken city,
Wonderful as Ys.
All day long I hear the mellow tolling
Of its sweet-sad lonely bells of peace,
Rocked by tides that wash through all its portals
Without let or cease.

But the two or three stanzas in Browning's manner, thrust into the middle of the poem ("some one smiles, and there's the perfect comrade" etcetera) about spring magic and the unexpected smile are strangely out of tone in their cadences with the rest of it. An example of Carman's curious insensibility to a conflict of tones in his compositions.[1]

One can hardly avoid some notice of the contributions of Richard Hovey to the Vagabondia volumes. The two poets were so closely united in their work and life at this time, and their mutual influence is obvious. Hovey's poems, like those of Carman, are extremely varied in tone and style. His "Three of a Kind" is a good companion piece in its tone to Carman's "Joys of the Road". He has not the light touch and graceful turns of his comrade. The idea of a poetry of Vagabondia may have originated with him, but it is Carman chiefly who creates and establishes that higher type of verse, half playful fancy,

[1] This poem appeared partly rewritten as "The Bells of Ys" in a recent volume of verse, *Far Horizons*. The Browning touches have been left out and there are other significant alterations.

half serious symbol, which is its distinctive charm. But Hovey has fire and flame in his lines and his free roving glance takes in more of the movement and variety of the world. The rollicking drinking song, "Barney McGee" or "The Kavanagh", with its Irish flavour, is his, and the fine Bohemian swagger of—

> Three of us without a care
> In the red September
> Tramping down the roads of Maine,
> Making merry with the rain,
> With the fellow-winds afare
> Where the winds remember.

His amatory lyrics "Laurana's Song" and "The King's Son" have sometimes the fierce flame of Swinburne's phrase in them. But his "Wander-Lovers" is in the typical style of Vagabondia verse, a pretty kind of gypsy-idyll with fine touches in its latter half which remind one strongly of Carman's vein and workmanship. It would be only natural if some notes passed in that way from the one to the other. But there is Hovey's own free swing in an opening like this:

> Down the world with Marna!
> That's the life for me!
> Wandering with the wandering wind,
> Vagabond and unconfined!
> Roving with the roving rain
> Its unboundaried domain!
> Kith and kin of wander-kind,
> Children of the sea!
> . . . . . .
> All the seaboard knows us
> From Fundy to the Keys;
> Every bend and every creek
> Of abundant Chesapeake;

Ardise hills and Newport coves
And the far-off orange groves,
Where Floridian oceans break,
Tropic tiger seas.

But Marna is not a thoughtless Bohemian, she is pictured for us as the ideal "new woman" full of feminine sensibility and nobility, but with a divine vision in her face and a consciousness of the spiritual problems which enrich and complicate life.

Marna with the wind's will,
Daughter of the sea!
Marna of the quick disdain,
Starting at the dream of stain!
At a smile with love aglow,
At a frown a statued woe,
Standing pinnacled in pain
Till a kiss sets free!
. . . . . .
Marna of the far quest
After the divine!
Striving ever for some goal
Past the blunder-god's control!
Dreaming of potential years
When no day shall dawn in fears!
That's the Marna of my soul,
Wander-bride of mine!

But the revelling strain of "Off with the fetters", or "Barney McGee", or even a fine flight of fancy like "Down the world with Marna" hardly represents all that is characteristic of Hovey's art even in Vagabondia poetry. He has a meditative vein which is full of the sense of life's higher adventure, of the ardour of the wrestle with fate. He grasps his subject with a passionate kind of force and candour of thought though he has not the

fine imaginative glance of Carman, nor his graceful phantasy. He uses free modernist forms of verse and likes a mixed style of versification which allows him to pass readily from one kind of movement to another. His "June Night in Washington" is in free unrhymed verse with impressionistic glances into noctural silence and sounds rather in the manner of Henley's free verse. "Spring", which he recited at a Fraternity gathering in Michigan University, and "The Faun", are good examples of his mixed compositions. "The Faun" is an expression of imaginative ecstasy in wild nature, the day-dream of a poet seeking escape from a civilization that had lost its primitive contact with the old earth. The subject may have been suggested to him by Mallarmé's famous poem, but his treatment of it shows how little real influence the obscure compositions of the French poet had on him.

> For I am woodland-natured, and have made
> Dryads my bedfellows,
> And I have played
> With the sleek Naiads in the splash of pools
> And made a mock of gowned and trousered fools.
> . . . . . .
> O goodly damp smell of the ground!
> O rough sweet bark of the trees!
> O clear sharp cracklings of sound!
> O life that's a-thrill and a-bound
> With the vigour of boyhood and morning, and the noon-
> tide's rapture of ease!

But just because this vision of Faun-life retains so much of the common unmystical experience of the senses, one feels it is only a poetic fiction of life in Vagabondia, without the curious psychological interest which modern-

ists like Mallarmé and Valéry give such themes. There are graver notes too from Hovey even in the first Vagabondia volume. Beneath the robust surface of his temperament there is a sensitivity which has some dread of fate, you can see it in the way in which he is so often facing defiantly the chances of life. That mood gets a splendidly vigorous and sincere expression in his poem "At the Cross Roads", in the third volume.

The poetry of the first two Vagabondia volumes is mainly a poetry of youth and goodfellowship. It gives us pleasant and suggestive glimpses of a spiritual Bohemia and its young artists hard at work translating their experience, their day-dreams, and their thoughts about life into the lighter forms of art. There was a considerable difference of temperament in the two but evidently much concordance of opinion, just the relationship which makes collaboration harmonious and helpful. Hovey seems to have been a typical American with an easy freedom of speech and manner, and with fewer inherited hesitancies in him than Carman had to wrestle with. Carman was a shyer, more reticent nature, with brooding, visionary forms of thought and fancy in him which would not be always ready or willing to show themselves. They had passed much of their time with each other in different places, in New York and Chicago, and in summer visits and excursions. That last decade of the century from the publication of the Grand Pré volume and the first of the Vagabondia series onward was evidently a sunny time of comradeship and youthful hopes. We get a glimpse of them both, in their budding period, from Lloyd Roberts

in his book on the Roberts family. They were then on a visit to his father who at that time still held the position of professor of literature at King's College, Nova Scotia, and was living in the little college town of Windsor. Uncle Bliss, as he was called in the Roberts family,—he was really only a second cousin—is described by Lloyd Roberts as "an etherealized Lincoln . . . huge, gray and quiet". He did not talk much and rarely spoke to the youngsters, Lloyd reports, but made droll remarks at long intervals in a drawling voice. He stayed mostly in the study behind closed doors, where Lloyd and the other children could hear him droning his verses. Perhaps he was too much immersed just then in mystical Grand Pré visions to care for the innocent familiarities and banalities of the family circle. But there was nothing awkward in his bearing. He had the calm self-possession, the confident front, which is much commoner in the New World in such types, than in the Old. When the three young poets were by themselves, of course the talk was brisk enough. Then the children would hear loud laughter and strange chaff of the literary workshop beyond their comprehension. Hovey, as the younger Roberts describes him, was a great contrast to his comrade, a broad, black, bearded man, socially inclined, and always "roaring in the gale of his own exuberance"; that last touch may be exaggerative, but one can hear him helping Roberts out with a hearty voice when that high spirited paterfamilias led the family chorussing of "I Wish I Were a Buttercup" or "Rolling Home".

But if the family circle was not quite Carman's

sphere, he had plenty of the convivial instinct and good-fellowship which is so poetically treated in the Vagabondia poems. He would be best, of course, when he was alone with some sympathetic friend like Hovey, or a whole-hearted admirer like McArthur, but his pursuit of the ideal vision did not demand any rigour of isolation except in its own hours. Nor, half mystical though it was, did it prevent him cultivating light veins of humour and fancy. Under that quiet, impassive exterior, as the younger Roberts describes it, there was considerable spiritual versatility. He has very happy veins of light irony and gay satire, and these find a natural place in the Vagabondia volumes, as part of the spiritual Bohemian's gaiety and his scoffing exposure of the world's moral fanfaronade. Little pieces like "The Unsainting of the Kavin" and "A More Ancient Mariner" have a sparkling wit and an artistic completeness which did more perhaps to bring him into favour with the American public than his elevated poetry. You can see the vein is thoroughly native to the poet, every line almost is a discovery. In "A More Ancient Mariner", he hymns the bee with a slightly ironic but sprightly humour as the kind of moralist that nature makes:

> The swarthy bee is a buccaneer,
> A burly velveted rover,
> Who loves the booming wind in his ear
> As he sails the seas of clover.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> He woos the Poppy and weds the Peach,
> Inveigles Daffodilly
> And then like a tramp abandons each
> For the gorgeous Canada Lily.

There's not a soul in the garden world
But wishes the day were shorter,
When Mariner B. puts out to sea
With the wind in the proper quarter.

Or, so they say! But I have my doubts;
For the flowers are only human,
And the valour and gold of a vagrant bold
Were always dear to woman.

. . . . . .

His morals are mixed, but his will is fixed;
He prospers after his kind,
And follows an instinct, compass-sure,
The philosophers call blind.

. . . . . .

He never could box the compass round;
He doesn't know port from starboard;
But he knows the gates of Sundown Straits,
Where the choicest goods are harboured.

. . . . . .

He steers and veers on the slant of the gale,
Like the fiend of Vanderdecken,
And there's never an unknown course to sail
But his crazy log can reckon.

That is not easy to beat in its own style of witty fancy. The gay malice of "The Unsainting of Kavin" is equally good. He can be, too, in "The Sceptics", piquantly mordant, though in that piece and in "Philistia" he comes rather near the shirt-sleves style of the "colyumist". The "Hearse-Horse" and "The Night-Washers" are brief but striking essays in a grim Macaberesque vein of humour rather rare in him. "The Gravedigger", too, in another collection shows a command not much exercised of the weird and grotesque in art. He captures the note well in the opening stanzas and in the refrain:

Oh, the shambling sea is a sexton old,
And well his work is done.
With an equal grave for lord and knave,
He buries them every one.

Then hoy and rip, with a rolling hip,
He makes for the nearest shore;
And God who sent him a thousand ship
Will send him a thousand more;
But some he'll save for a bleaching grave,
And shoulder them in to shore,—
Shoulder them in, shoulder them in,
Shoulder them in to shore.

The rest is makeshift and poetic *blague* ("Oh, fair they say was his bride to see. And wilful she must have been", et cetera,) baser coin thrown in with a good gold piece.

The Vagabondia poetry with its genial miscellaneous character was a popular hit, though the higher ambitions of both poets lay in other fields. Even in the Vagabondia volumes the poetry of both keeps fine attachments to literary traditions and is full of literary reminiscence and allusion. Hovey in particular often passes out of the typical tone and manner of Vagabondia into high lyrical effusiveness or solemn discourse. His sonnet on Verlaine is an excellent characterization of that prince of vagabonds who has certainly every right to a memorial verse in a Vagabondia volume, but its tone is more that of a Wordsworth than of a brother in Bohemia; and his lines on Partridge's statue of Shakespeare have the didactic gravity of Wordsworth's blank verse.

Carman is more mindful of what is due to the tone of Vagagondia. His verses "In a Copy of Browning", a

lightly touched review of Browning's characteristics, are just in the style one expects in a Vagabondia volume, a playful but suggestive appreciation. He acknowledges his debt to the master;

> While some upbraid you,
> And some parade you,
> Nine years have made you
> My master still.

There are lines also in memory of Robert Louis Stevenson. The opening stanzas are very well turned as a farewell shot from Vagabondia over that grave:

> You hearken, fellows? Turned aside
> Into the road-house of the past!
> The prince of vagabonds is gone
> To house among his peers at last.
>
> The stainless gallant gentleman,
> So glad in life, he gave no trace,
> No hint he even once beheld
> The spectre peering in his face.

When Carman finds the happy idea, he can dress it admirably, though it may be oftener in fancy dress or heraldic costume than in plainer wear. In elevated themes his inventive faculty tends to lean rather heavily on literary tradition. Of the thirteen stanzas which this poem has, ten are taken up by that rather worn out poetic device of a reception in the Elysian fields,—Chaucer, Milton, Horace and Omar, Swift and Walter Scott, and other great shades being pictured as welcoming the newcomer there. Not but what Carman manages to give the catalogue some fine touches, "Keats of the

more than mortal tongue", Sir Walter, well characterized as—

> The moralist it could not spoil,
> To hold an empire in his hands.

"Dear Lamb", "excellent Montague", and "the credible Defoe" are also amongst the reception committee, with Shakespeare and Cervantes for ushers, and old Ben apparently as door-keeper.

> And portly Ben will smile to see
> The velvet jacket at the door.

But the Elysian reception was becoming too artificial a device for modern poetry, though William Watson, the English poet, is also conservative enough to use it.

IV

MEMORIAL VERSE, ELEGIES, AND BALLADS

Between 1895 and 1902 Carman published various volumes, chiefly elegiac and ballad verse. They show almost a new phase of this artist whose work is often done in compartments distinct from each other not only in form but in tone and plane of thought. His memorial verse holds a very important place in his work. Some of it represents the most elevated form of his lyric and in general it brings him nearer a direct and critical interpretation of human life than either the mystical symbolism of his earlier work or the free, half-playful fancy of the typical Vagabondia song. For memorial verse has to embody somehow a judgment, from a poet's spiritual point of view, of what the man's worth was to humanity. The classical Greek elegy did this by a pastoral symbolism, the echoes of which lived long in English poetry. It was of course a highly artificial form and had become so cheap and common that the vigorous honesty of Samuel Johnson denounced it as "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting", even in the exquisite example of the "Lycidas". That Arcadian symbolism is very far, however, from being so much in vogue now; it was even venturesome of Matthew Arnold to mingle

some fine notes from it with more modern ones in his "Thyrsis".

Modern memorial verse has two or three distinct types. There is still a classical form of grand elegy in use. It avoids the old pastoralism of Bion's Epitaph and the lament for Daphnis, but it has a similar elevation of style and makes a similar use of symbolical characterization and the high conventions of poetic vision. The Fates, the Furies, and the Norns, the Mighty Mother and the Muses can still live in its atmosphere along with more modern but equally transcendental modes of conception; it is a natural vehicle for that neo-classical feeling for Greek mythology which has almost restored a chosen few of the ancient divinities to their seats, at least in the realm of poetry. Shelley's "Adonaïs", of course, and Swinburne's "*Ave atque Vale*" are the great modern examples. A bitter-sweet poignancy of farewell which mingles the breath of Venus Erycina and the veiled Prosperine, his two favourite goddesses, vitalizes Swinburne's song, and some immortal stanzas, of an ethereal vision that turns the dull materiality of the world to spiritual flame, redeem Shelley's from its overweight of classical symbols and personifications.

But this grand style of elegy is only suitable for commemorating those very high in the roll of fame (though Milton in the fashion of his time clothes an obscure Cambridge scholar in the pastoral mantle of the bucolic poets) and in fact is mostly reserved just as its ancient form was, for the poets themselves, at least for the greater amongst them, the "sons of light" whose spir-

itual life can be regarded as harmonizing with such high imaginations. One would not naturally invoke the Mighty Mother, or recall the memories of Dorian song, in verses for Lord Kitchener, or declare in a threnody for Roosevelt that his voice still lives in the music of nature. It might be true, it is certainly logical enough according to the poetic eschatology of Shelley and Carman, but the particular instance would probably fail to excite what our younger critics call an emotional recognition of truth. At the other end of the scale there is the simple type of memorial verse for a friend not perhaps much known beyond private circles, yet with distinction enough in his nature or his life to make a portrait for the public. Arnold's lines on Quillinan touch the heights of a truthful yet poetic simplicity in this type:

> With all the fortunate have not,
> With gentle voice and brow.

Between these two types there are the various grades of tone and elevation which reflect either the dignity of the subject or the poet's sense of what he can best do with it. Arnold, for example, though he reaches the highest elegiac note in "Thyrsis" shows his distinctive quality, the fine union of critical thought and poetic feeling, best in the less elaborate memorial verses which commemorate Wordsworth, Goethe and Byron, Heine and the author of "Obermann." It is only he who can blend that perfected critical estimate with the charm of elegiac pathos.

Carman's memorial verse has a characteristically wide range. He is at home in this type of composition with its various traditions of tone and treatment. His tone is al-

ways in subtle sympathy with his theme. The type of memorial verse he chooses for a Shelley, a Verlaine, a Stevenson or a private friend like Philip Savage is finely differentiated. His verses "To Paul Verlaine" for example, bring with them a justly sympathetic idea of that personality. They are unequal (that is always another matter in Carman), commonplace rhetoric about "the princely manorhouse of art", etcetera, being mingled with the finer touches which express so admirably the pathos of Verlaine's destiny.

> Not much we gave you when alive,
> Whom now we lavishly deplore,—
> A little bread, a little wine,
> A little *caporal*,—no more.
>
> Here in our lodging of a day
> You roistered till we were appalled;
> Departing, in your room we found
> A string of golden verses scrawled.

That last stanza, if it stood alone, would be amongst the best epigrams of literature. The sentiment of the closing verses, however, is perhaps a little artificial; the poet is thinking of a proposed statue of Verlaine in the Luxembourg gardens:

> There you shall stand, the very mien
> You wore in Paris streets of old,
> And ponder what a thing is life,
> Or watch the chestnut blooms unfold.
>
> There you will find, I dare surmise,
> Another tolerance than ours,
> The loving kindness of the grass,
> The tender patience of the flowers.
> . . . . . .

And there be yours, the livelong day,
Beyond the mordant reach of pain,
The little gospel of the leaves,
The *Nunc dimittis* of the rain!

Carman with his cosmic idealism makes almost as much use of fine conventions as Sicilian elegy itself does. That song of the rain, however, was a characteristic *cliché* with the French Symbolists and may very well figure in verses to the prince of Symbolists. "*La pluie, la pluie! O le chant de la pluie!*"

Hovey also has lines on Verlaine, a sonnet in the second Vagabondia volume. His piece has stronger traits of characterization than Carman's;

Avid of life and love, insatiate vagabond
. . . . . .
Prowler of obscure streets that riot reels along
. . . . . .
Yet under the revolt, the revel, the despond,
What pools of innocence, what crystal benison

But it is not by a long way so fine a memorial as that which Carman's more diaphanous fancy has given the great inventor of a new lyrical pathos.

Carman has a second poem in memory of Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Seamark", originally published by itself in 1895. This time it is in the higher elegiac style and begins with a fine lyrical cry:

Cold, the dull cold! What ails the sun,
And takes the heart out of the day?
What makes the morning look so mean,
The Common so forlorn and gray?
. . . . . .

Fades, it all fades! I only see
The poster with its red and blues
Bidding the heart stand still to take
Its desolating stab of news.

That intimate and magic name:
"Dead in Samoa" . . . Cry your cries,
O city of the golden dome
Under the gray Atlantic skies!

Carman's feeling for Stevenson is evidently of a more personal quality than for any other of the masters in art. He learned more from Browning no doubt and, as we shall see, his respect for the prophetic voice in Shelley is quite religious, and he knows Keats is a master for masters, but Stevenson is near his heart as a grand type of that Vagabondia life which Carman and Hovey were celebrating in verse.[1] He had lived that ideal of the spiritual vagrant who loves the freedom and adventure of the highways and turns his experiences into song and romance as he goes along. In Carman's poem he figures as one—

. . . of the light-hearted guild,
The mystic fellowcraft of joy,
Who tarry for the news of truth,
And listen for some vast ahoy

Blown in from sea. . . .

The fine, large, loose amplitude of that metaphor does not require any signature. Carman's poem may not focus quite perfectly the lights and the shadows in Stevenson's nature. Perhaps it would need a Scot who loved the streets of old Edinburgh and the moors "where the whaups are crying about the graves of the martyrs", to

[1] He had met the English poet at Saranac Lake in the Adirondacks and kept up a friendly intercourse with him.

do that. But it is a poem of melodious cadences and high glancing metaphor. The descriptions of Samoan scenery, the tropical sea and sky, the passing ocean traffic and the mountain peak where the "brown limbed island men" laid Stevenson to rest certainly give brilliant local colour to "A Seamark".

> High on a peak adrift with mist,
> And round whose bases, far beneath
> The snow-white wheeling tropic birds,
> The emerald dragon breaks his teeth.

That is the closing fanfare of a poem which is rich in that kind of music.

But it was for Shelley that Carman sought his highest elegiac note. Here we have grand elegy, one of the summits of lyrical poetry, with its tremendous demand for high imaginative vision and impassioned music. The centenary poem for Shelley has the title of "The White Gull", the shining flight of that bird over the wide sea horizon being one of the images it uses as a symbol of Shelley's career. It begins with two introductory stanzas of rather mystical suggestion, preluding tones, as it were, designed to awaken in the reader some high mood of reverie in sympathy with the vision which is to come. These stanzas introduce the sea-motif, just as a musical overture would, and quite as vaguely, as far as logical reference is concerned.

> . . . . . .
> The sea has many a tale to tell
> His younger kin.
>
> For we are his, bone of his bone,
> Breath of his breath;

The doom tides sway us at their will;
The sky of being rounds us still;
And over us at last is blown
The wind of death.

Pure *Stimmung*, as the Germans say. At one time I thought it might contain a reference to Hesiod's old Pontus and his mythological relation to men, or to some theory of cosmological science, but the poet shook his head negatively. . . . Then the theme proper begins:

A hundred years ago to-day
There came a soul,
A pilgrim of the perilous light,
Treading the spheral paths of night,
On whom the word and vision lay
With dread control.

That, I fancy, may have been the original opening, for there is always something genial in Carman's openings, heaven sent, as Paul Valéry puts it; they strike the keynote of his theme impressively. That stanza contains in its solemn hierophantic phrases the whole idea of the poem. But for a time the poet lingers on descriptions of sea-scenery as a preparation for that similitude of the sea-gull's flight which gives its title to the poem. The vignettes of the scenery are good as they always are in Carman. The transition to the similitude is rather strained, heavily Pindaric in its stretch:

And something, Shelley, like thy fame
Dares the wide morn
In that sea-rover's glimmering flight,
As if the Northland and the night
Should hear thy splendid valiant name
Put scorn to scorn.

But there is a kind of Pindaric elevation and reach about the poem which carries the load. And Pindar himself often gives learned Oxford and Harvard a good deal of trouble with his impetuous flights. It is true they are scanning him at the rather long range of twenty-six centuries.

After that we get the central idea of the poem. To Carman the poet of the "Adonaïs" and the "Prometheus" was not merely, like Keats, a melodious angel sent into the world to reveal its highest spiritual beauty to men, he was a leader in humanity's great war for freedom, a Knight of the Holy Ghost spending his life in a struggle with the powers of darkness. Not that he won the battle or even made the victory sure, for Carman's idea is naturally that of a Promethean revolt ages long and even doubtful in its issue. The shadow of something "ineffectual" in Shelley's fight, or of something sombre in the grandeur of the Shelleyan universe casts a poetic gloom at times on the poem, with its central idea of a somnolent humanity that is difficult to lead to the light. But the vision is quite in harmony with the genius of Shelley and the spirit of his poetry, with its images of mortality and the desolations of Time, and of the never ending Promethean struggle. Carman's poem brings into strong poetic relief this view of Shelley as a great "soldier in the war of liberation of humanity", the epitaph which Arnold somewhat rigorously denied to Heine,—yet as a sort of leader of a forlorn hope sent out to an august doom by the Fates. It is brilliantly imaged, with

a passionate depth of imagination that carries well its soaring symbolism and opulence of epithet.

O captain of the rebel host,
Lead forth and far!
The toiling troopers of the night
Press on the unavailing fight;
The sombre field is not yet lost,
With thee for star.

Thy lips have set the hail and haste
Of clarions free
To bugle down the wintry verge
Of time forever, where the surge
Thunders and crumbles on a waste
And open sea.

Did the cold Norns who pattern life
With haste and rest
Take thought to cheer their pilgrims on
Through trackless twilights vast and wan,
Across the failure and the strife,
From quest to quest,—

Set their last kiss upon thy face,
And let thee go
To tell the haunted whisperings
Of unimaginable things,
Which plague thy fellows with a trace
They cannot know?

So might they fashion and send forth
Their house of doom,
Through the pale splendour of the night,
In vibrant, hurled impetuous flight,
A resonant meteor of the North
From gloom to gloom.

The poem tends to fall into two parts, Shelley as the leader of humanity in its Promethean struggle, and Shelley as the poet of nature. There is not much that is

really arresting in the second part, though it has many stanzas of graceful fancy on the elements of nature which may have nourished Shelley's genius, the shy-born forest flowers he must have heard talking to the wind, the marching sweep of the blown white rain, the lure of Tyrian autumn, the voices of the hills, etcetera, all Carman's usual treasure-bag of nature's beauties. The poem is rather an early one, evidently, part of the poetry of the endless quest and the sombre field. It is suffused with the sublimity of vision and feeling inherent in the poet's conception of Shelley, and has a luxury of similitudes. They crowd upon him and he rejects none. Shelley is successively likened to a pilgrim of light treading the spheral paths of night, a white gull daring the wide morn, a marsh-wandering fire leading the world's night march through this ghostly fen, a captain of the rebel host, a resonant meteor of the North, a wistful child on the red moorlands by the sea, a clear spirit dwelling with the nomad tents of rain and marching with the gold-red ranks of grain. Carman's valuation of Shelley might seem excessive if you consider merely the world-weight and influence of Shelley's poetry. Europe did not accept him as it accepted Byron. But in English critical circles Shelley's fame was even higher seventy years ago than when Carman was writing. One has only to read the magnificent lines which the young Browning wrote of him in "Pauline" ("Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever") to see the kind of lone star in poetry which Shelley was for the poets of that time. In his prose essay written twenty years later, it is true Browning is more

guarded and critical, but he still gives Shelley a high place as a "seer rather than a fashioner". That is it, there is some want of structural outline and relief in his work. But of late the Continental appreciation of Shelley has been growing, very much in the direction of Carman's vision of him. In Shelley's life and work there is a clearness and grandeur of type, which men will always value even to excess, whether it express itself in radiant and translucent speech or in the barbaric forms used by Walt Whitman. It is worth to men in general what an exhaustively perfect experiment is to the scientist, all that and something more.

The poem in memory of Keats shows a significant difference in style and form. Shelley was a theme which was likely to call out all that was most adventurous in Carman's style. But "By the Aurelian Wall" is a simple form of allegory with a light symbolism which Carman uses very skilfully to suggest the wonder that John Keats was in the world of art. A stranger has left his magical flute to "one of the dark children standing by" as a souvenir of his sojourn in their country. In due time the child learns to use it and produces music which eventually, strange and novel as its notes are, wins all hearts and becomes the glory of the countryside. The opening stanza strikes the note impressively as usual, in fine *bravura:*

> By the Aurelian Wall,
> Where the long shadows of the centuries fall
> From Caius Cestius' tomb,
> A weary mortal seeking rest found room
> For quiet burial, . . .

Carman is very ingenious in making his allegory a critical reflection of phases in the poetic development of Keats. The theme suits his fancy and he moves with easy mastery in it. And he does not forget to mark that tones from that fine music have reached Grand Pré and the Gaspereau in certain Canadian poets:

> Grand Pré and Margaree
> Hear it upbruited from the unresting sea;
> And the small Gaspereau,
> Whose yellow leaves repeat it, seems to know
> A new felicity.

The poem is well constructed although there is some trouble at the start where he is trying to suggest the origin of Keats's idyllic strain in the old Greek pastoral. Its cadences too are more quietly meditative than is usual with Carman at this period. It is the rarefied poetry of literary tradition, but alive with feeling though it does not flame with the intensity of the poem on Shelley.

There are two memorial poems which Carman seems to have thought light enough in style or form to find a place amongst the Vagabondia poems, in the third volume of that series. They are verses in memory of friends not much known beyond private circles. It is not easy to make great commemorative verse for an individual unknown to the public, constructing an image of his modest personality and creating an interest in it for readers who have nothing to go on but the poet's friendly word. Arnold is happy enough to strike a major chord in his lines of Quillinan, but Wordsworth's verses on Matthew, his old schoolmaster, though they have some good Words-

worthian modelling in them, do not so clearly pass beyond the significance of a personal regret. Carman has some forty couplets on Philip Savage. The poem suggests a modestly serene and sympathetic personality which Carman invests with poetic atmosphere as a mystical lover and poet of nature in the Emersonian ritual:

Fields by Massachusetts Bay,
Where is he who yesterday

Called you Home and loved to go
Where the cherry spreads her snow,

Through the purple misty woods
Of your soft spring solitudes,

Listening for the first fine gush
Of his fellow, the shy thrush—

Hearkening some diviner tone
Than our ears have ever known?
. . . . . .
Stony uplands where the quail
Whistles by the pasture rail,

Where is one to whom you lent
Of your wise serene content,

Minstrel of your pagan psalm
With an Emersonian calm?

There is a pleasing poetic simplicity in the lines for Philip Savage. Their mould is that of the Emersonian couplet, but with a softer music than you find in the hard gem-like cut of Emerson's verse.

And what about the rest of those forty odd couplets to the memory of this modest personality—how does

Carman make it out? Well, they are just a repetition, in Carman's expansive way of the formula in the verses I have quoted: Where is he? All nature "the wind he loved so well" and the fields along the sea with their "sweet sincerity" and the marshy acres with their brave felicity, and orchards green and dim, and the air from the iris meadows, and the elms and the bobolinks, shall answer the question

> Where is he who should have been
> Poet of your lovely mien?

It is a modern form of the ancient bucolic elegy with its poetic conventions and the fine monotony of lament in its calls on the woods and pastures to mourn the death of Bion who celebrated them in his songs. But the introduction of the Waring motif at the end is a false note; it is not only a very obvious borrowing, it does not go at all well with the wise serenity and content of this modest poet and lover of his native fields. When Carman loses his road he can be terribly artificial. "Can it be", he asks,

> Or an idler would he be
> In the islands of the Sea?
> Can it be that he is gone,
> Like so many a roving one,
>
> The dread Arctic to explore,

"Non Omnis Moriar", a poem in memory of Gleeson White, commemorates another fine soul prematurely called from a world in which according to the poet, he stood aloof from the crowd and its ambitions. It is written in the purified light of affectionate remembrance and

concludes with a characteristic proclamation of the poet's faith in some great reservoir of eternal existence:

> There is a part of me that knows
> Beneath incertitude and fear,
> I shall not perish when I pass
> Beyond mortality's frontier;
>
> But greatly having joyed and grieved,
> Greatly content shall hear the sigh
> Of the strange wind across the lone
> Bright lands of taciturnity.

"Lone bright lands of taciturnity". Taciturnity is not a very cheerful word in this connection, but the phrase is meant to be one of those soothing expressions with which the new mysticism was trying to give the unimaginable some actuality for our thought. Modern poetry is highly philosophical even when it avoids philosophical terminology, full of mystical ideas and metaphysical implications which partly fill the place once occupied by high poetic conventions. Any little poem now has casual sublimities about the nature of life and the universe of the kind that it takes a big volume of Bradley or Münsterberg to elucidate. They are mostly little more than fugitive ideas drawn loosely from the miscellaneous stock floating at large in the modern consciousness. And the modern consciousness is now so over-saturated with the débris and detached fragments of creeds and systems that the transcendental phrase falls on the reader like snow on water. Much of the poetry written to-day has a fresh sense of life and a free engaging style, but its casual volatile sensibility, the uncertain reflection of scattered

lights from many different systems, hardly acts on the mind either as a clarifying or a crystallizing agent. Stendhal's taunt that poetry is a refuge for sloppy thought has even more point in our day than it had in his time.

The poetry that has been the most successful in penetrating this oversaturated modern consciousness has had not only a strong and consistent philosophical groundwork, but a style which has a subtle power of keeping the orientation of its thought before the reader. This is no doubt the reason why the highly esoteric poetry of the new French schools has acquired such significance for our time; not because it is the truest or highest form of poetry, but because its search for new horizons and mystical confines of thought, if it was to mean anything at all, required a severe integrity in the use of the mystical consciousness. It has its own excesses in the way of obscure speech, but its intellectual austerity in the best men disdains the unphilosophical looseness in the exaltations of ordinary poetry. Its rigour is a corrective of modern laxity. This austerity or asceticism expresses itself very differently of course in different poets, in the poetry for example of Paul Claudel and that of Paul Valéry, but it makes the art of each very significant as, in its own way, a supreme expression of modern or modernist tendencies. Even in a poem like Valéry's "Palme", which is half popular in its style, the cosmic idea is made to disclose its exact philosophic basis and confines in a language which blends scientific analysis with transcendental feeling.

Par la sève solennelle
Une espérance éternelle
Monte à la maturité.

That style is not likely to be as popular as Joyce Kilmer's spirited verses quoted and praised in all anthologies:

A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts its leafy arms to pray.

But though the language in the latter is conventionally clear, the nature of the thought is really obscure for our age. It may contain a mystical or philosophical idea of the cosmic life in nature, or it may be common metaphor, the hyperbole of devout feeling, the reader hardly asks which.

We have another example in the work of Yeats of the philosophical consistency and unity of tone which give the mystical element in modern poetry its significance. The ascetic purity of its note comes from that and has some kinship with *la poésie pure* of the French school. His general symbolism, however, has the powerful support of a well-filled background of national tradition and legend, with all its romantic material of primitive folk and fairy lore and the superstitiously intimate sense of nature in the Irish heart, mostly of a foreboding omen-fearing kind. His poetic world is a circumscribed but very harmonious whole, and its spiritual reality is admirably maintained for us by the mystical orientation of his style: "the wind blows over the lonely of heart"; "came to cast a song into the air"; "Mother Eiré that is always young", "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree".

These are quiet flouts at the rationalism of a Protestant bourgeois civilisation which is so shy of mystical messages, and of the

> . . . dim wisdoms old and deep
> That God gives unto man in sleep.

Carman's poetry also has a distinct philosophical groundwork to sustain it, and a style that reflects very effectively the mystical orientation of his thought. His basis is the old transcendental metaphysic which is so formally set forth in *Behind the Arras*, but he expands it in various ways, chiefly by a bolder, more venturous treatment of the mystical element in it, but sometimes also by bringing into it the new ideas of science. That phrase of his, "the lone bright lands of taciturnity", for example, represents a tendency to bring it nearer the speculative occultism of Oriental mystics. Classical transcendentalism in the nineteenth century in a Wordsworth, an Emerson or a Browning, respected reason and the limits of the knowable too much to indulge in mystical eschatology, even if it might not be altogether alien to their way of interpreting life. Even Browning does not go farther in that direction than a hopeful deduction of a future existence from the otherwise inexplicable sublimities in human aspiration and effort; a poetic amplification in fact of Kant's argument. And Emerson shelters himself in mild quotations from Swedenborg. But this occult strain never becomes more than a casual element in Carman's poetry, hardly representing the place it secretly occupied in his thoughts. Certainly it was never strongly enough

embodied in verse to bring whole-souled mystics to his side.

His most significant efforts to develop the old transcendentalism, as we shall see when we come to the series of volumes he published under the title of *The Pipes of Pan*, lay in a mystical extension of its philosophy of nature as a teacher and guide to the meaning of the universe, and in a very free expansion of its method of interpreting the spiritual history of man. The transcendental mode of thought, originating in the metaphysical schools of Germany, is distinguished by its power of reconciling all the diverse historical manifestations of the human spirit in creeds, symbols and ideals as stages of civilization which express a common aspiration and hope. Carman's use of this method is too facile. When his transcendental vision of life began to emerge out of the vague æstheticism of his early Grand Pré poems into the clear philosophical outline it has in *Behind the Arras*, it went on expanding itself into the vast survey of things we have in *The Pipes of Pan*, with a variety of illustration drawn from many fields of life and thought, often from exotic regions where his tact and touch were imperfect. His interpretation of life becomes in this way a comprehensive but rather inconsistent and confused expression of all the idealism floating loosely in the over-saturated consciousness of the age.

Carman is a versatile artist with a tendency to experiment in all tones and forms and leave nothing untried that is within his lyrical range. There is a certain monotony it is true in the transcendental strain of his

nature poetry, a fixed mode of interpretation which makes itself felt in the frequent repetition of the same sentiments, but in other themes the variety of talent he displays is rather wonderful. The artist in him is strongly in evidence here, and though the copiousness of his invention often takes the form of reproducing established types and methods of treatment, there is always amongst the many forms he uses one which is his own and represents what is peculiar in his art. His ballad poetry, for example, contains a variety of types, most of which are reproductions of forms and strains familiar to every reader. I have already noticed his imitation of the old Ghost ballad in "The Yule Guest". He can do the popular ballad of modern adventure too, and is especially good in the ballad of sea-adventure in which his sea-phrases are fresh and grip like iron; his "Arnold Master of the Scud" has great vigour and bravery, which do not, however, take it out of a rather common form of imaginative invention. But in his symbolical ballads you find a really distinctive and original use of the ballad form as a vehicle for his transcendental vision of life. A ballad like "The Shadow Boatswain" or "The Master of the Isles" is his ballad and no one else's. In both poems putting out to sea is an allegory of the final voyage into the unknown; the sea-phrases as usual are perfect pictures.

> There is rumour in Dark Harbour,
> And the folk are all astir;
> For a stranger in the offing
> Draws them down to gaze at her,
> . . . . . .

Just beyond our utmost fathom
Is the anchorage we crave,
But the Master knows the soundings
By the reach of every wave.

Just beyond the last horizon,
Vague upon the weather-gleam,
Loom the Faroff Isles forever,
That tradition of a dream.

. . . . . .

What imperial adventure
Some wide morning it will be,
Sweeping into Lonely Haven
From the chartless round of sea!

The simple cadence and rapid statement of the old ballad come very easily to Carman, and the simple words are electrified by a mystical current of feeling just as Scott and Byron electrify them by historical association and romantic passion. The ballad style does not carry readily the refinements of modern thought, but Carman's mastery of the symbolic phrase makes it adequate.

V

THE THIRD VAGABONDIA VOLUME

CARMAN'S next important publication was the third volume of the *Songs from Vagabondia.* It appeared in 1901 and was the last of the volumes written in collaboration with Richard Hovey. The two earlier volumes had received very good notices from the press and had passed into four or five editions (750 copies each) in as many years. The sprightly humour and free tone of the Vagabondia poetry naturally got its public more easily and quickly than the more elevated poetry they were cultivating as their higher reach in art. It was for one thing a more native product of the American spirit, and though it was originally conceived as a kind of temperamental revolt of youth against social banalities and hypocrisies, it kept well within the limits of the witty and not too serious jibe which the American public accepts most readily. Their defiances in the early volumes do not stir the depths much and are little more than a youthful assertion of the right to have your fling, as in Hovey's "Stein Song":

> For we know the world is glorious,
> And the goal a golden thing,
> And that God is not censorious,
> When his children have their fling.

There are a few mildly adventurous notes in the love lyrics, but their Vagabondish amours are no passionate imaginations but mostly fancy-flights like Hovey's "down the world with Marna", or seductive reminiscences of the irresistible Omar like Carman's,—

> A book of verses underneath the bough,
> A jug of wine, a loaf of bread—and thou!

There is nothing like the unabashed self-exposure of Verlaine in their confessional tones. Their Bohemianism is not that darker kind which takes the attitude of the rejected, it is the healthier Bohemianism of lovers of the freedom of nature in the woods and highways. Their "joys of the road" are chiefly leisure to live in the morning sunshine and to look at things with an unburdened spirit. Hovey is, as I have said, the more audacious of the two, but it is Carman who captures the finer idyllic tones for this world of Vagabondia.

> A vagrant's morning wide and blue,
> In early fall, when the wind walks too
> . . . . . .
> An idle noon, a bubbling spring,
> The sea in the pine tops murmuring.

Neither poet in the two earlier Vagabondia volumes allowed much of the harsher reality of life to colour his mood. The American temper of that time was all for optimism and the sunny smile. You find nothing like that deeper note of melancholy which is frequent enough even in the virile poetry of Burns and Scott, and was becoming in some of the typical modernists of this period al-

most a formal indictment of life, as in Ernest Dowson's lines:

> They are not long, the weeping and the laughter
> Love and desire and hate;
> I think they have no portion in us after
> We pass the gate.

Even Hovey, who is much readier than Carman to admit a note of the harsher reality into his poetry, usually hides its gloom in some brisk measure and stimulating call to arms:

> O strange new gloom! we await the doom,
> And what doom none may deem;
> But it's new, new, new—and we'll sail it through,
> While the mocking sea-gulls scream.

That is the deepest ethical note in Hovey's songs, the cheerful front shown towards the hazards of life, the spirit that sets the work and the valour above the reward and takes its cheerful toll of everything that comes its way, with something of Walt Whitman's broad acceptance of things. It is not quite so universal in spirit as that great Americano's tremendous salvoes of welcome to everything under the firmament and in the waters above and the waters below, but for an American *Pays de Bohème*, its furnishings are fairly comprehensive.

But Vagabondia with its care-free days and its nights under the stars, is a better country for youth to live in than for middle age. In the last of the three Vagabondia volumes which was published seven years after the first, the tone is noticeably graver. There is some attempt to maintain the old Bohemian gaiety at times; some spurts of the old wit and light-hearted fancy occur here and

there, but the predominant tone is serious, gravely reflective. Naturally the outlook of the two poets was becoming a little different. The world was changing its aspect for them in some ways. The novelty of the praise these spirited songs had received had worn off without anything very solid in the way of pudding taking its place. The financial side of the situation was naturally becoming more of a consideration to men who were now passing into the forties, and by all accounts some shadows from that side were now clouding life in Vagabondia, at least for Carman. Lloyd Roberts in his book gives a lightly touched but suggestive picture of a Bohemian trio living from hand to mouth in New York, in Ninth Street quarters, and sometimes with not enough amongst them "to go round". Lloyd himself, then only a youth, the anxious caterer for them, Bliss lounging in to breakfast in bath-robe and "his great feet in bath-slippers"; grave questionings as to the quality of the coffee ("although I had added a whole tablespoonful to the old grounds"), and also as to the source of the butter, still graver ones as to the technical classification of the eggs, rolls saved from the previous morning, etcetera. What did they expect for twenty-five cents a meal, thinks the caterer. But that was still a time when goodfellowship brightened the common lot, a time of hopeful productivity. Later on Lloyd's picture of the poet's existence is several shades darker. Hovey gone and Carman wandering about, a rather disconsolate vagrant in the midst of New York crowds. He pays only fitful visits now to the Roberts house in Fifth Avenue, "climbing our four flights

of dismal stairs in a wide-brimmed felt and heelless shoes, to slump languidly into an easy chair at the top, drop a few monosyllables and fade from sight again. "He was badly in need of the thump on the back of his Old Guard", the chronicler reports.

It is the old story of the struggling poet scribbling on odd bits of paper in his attic, or "browsing listlessly" over a bookstall, and explains, no doubt, some vague passing notes of Byronic gloom and defiance like those in "Out bound":

> The voyage is far on the trackless tide,
> The watch is long, and the seas are wide.
> . . . . . .
> Beyond the fathom of hope or fear,
> From bourn to bourn of the dusk I steer.

Despondent notes, however, are rare in Carman. He makes it a professional rule to exclude them from his poetry, as you may learn from his prose essays. It is from Hovey's contributions to the third Vagabondia volume that you get a clear glimpse of the advancing shadows and learn most about the inward pressure on the poetic life of the two. In fact Hovey's verse in this volume is often in a very sombre strain and shows an ominous preoccupation with thoughts of death and darkness ahead as if some sense of approaching fate—he died in 1900, before the volume was published—was already upon him. There is a flash of the old spirit in the vigorous verse of "At the Crossroads", but a feeling of loss or bafflement shades its fighting spirit. Few lines express the average human lot better than the following:

We have striven fair in love and war
But the wheel was always weighted;
We have lost the prize that we struggled for,
We have won the prize that was fated.

It is no doubt Carman whom he addresses in the same poem.

With a steady swing and an open brow
We have tramped the ways together,
But we're clasping hands at the cross-roads now
In the Fiend's own night for weather;
And whether we bleed or whether we smile
In the leagues that lie before us,
The ways of life are many a mile
And the dark of fate is o'er us.
Here's luck!
And a cheer for the dark before us.

The tone of Hovey's "Sea-Sonnets" is still more intense with the sense of a fate that baffles and threatens. I presume they are addressed to his wife.

Out with the tide—afar, afar, afar,
Where will the wide dark take us, you and me—
The darkness and the tempest and the sea?

These are the opening lines of the first sonnet and here are some lines from the third:

. . . . . .

Behold, about me and under and over me,
The darkness and the waters and the heaven—
Huge, shapeless monsters as of worlds in birth,
Dragons of Fate, that hold me not in scope—
Bar up my way with fierce, indifferent mirth;
And fall in giant frolic on my hope.
Their next mad rush may whelm me in the wave,
The dreaded horror of the sightless deep—
Only thy love, like moonlight, pours to save
My soul from the despairs that lunge and leap.

Another of his pieces, "When the Priest Left", seems almost to take us to his dying-bed. Yet there was nothing that foreshadowed the manner of his death which was the wholly unlooked for result of a minor operation. But I have heard that he had made some study of mediaeval astrology, and was impressed by the fact that in his own horoscope he found that an early demise was indicated. Some of Hovey's poems, however, are in a lighter tone, they may be earlier work. One, "Her Valentine", has all the gaiety and wit of other days.

Carman's contributions to the third volume are varied in mood. Some elegiac pieces I have already noticed, and there are some poems which are evidently meant to give the book a flavour of the old Vagabondia song and gaiety. But if comrade Hovey's mood has darkened, comrade Carman's wit has a sharper edge that it used to have. In "Spring Feeling" he turns on the ranks of the Modernists with some viciousness of stroke. The witty vigour of it is amusing, though it is more in the columnist's rough and ready style than is usual with him.

I'm sick of all these nincompoops,
Who weep through yards of verse,
And all these sonneteering dupes
Who whine and froth and curse.

. . . . . .

I'm sick of all these Yellow Books,
And all these Bodley heads;
I'm sick of all these freaks and spooks
And frights in double leads.

. . . . . .

I'm sick of all this poppycock
In bilious green and blue;

I'm tired to death of taking stock
Of everything that's "New."

New Art, New Movements, and New Schools,
All maimed and blind and halt!
And all the fads of the New Fools
Who cannot earn their salt.

I'm sick of the New Woman, too,
Good Lord, she's worst of all.
Her rights, her sphere, her point of view,
And all that folderol.

The third volume of Vagabondia songs was published after Hovey's death and has some verses written by Carman in memory of him. "The Lost Comrade" is quite original in style and borrows little or nothing from the traditional strains of elegiac verse. Its versification is of a peculiar and, for Carman, exceptional type, a quatrain beginning and ending with short three-foot lines which enclose two five-foot lines, the short line rhyming with the long one and the whole having a free exchange of iambic and anapestic feet. The effect as the poet manages it, is to give the verse the low cadences of rhythmic prose, mournful in tone, yet suggestive of a grief too real to care about tuneful measures. Carman's *facture* in this poem is of the modern type. Of course the effect obtained is not quite that of "the melodious tear", but it expresses well in its own way a brooding sense of loss. The closing verses in particular have a fine naturalness of sentiment; the poet will go "back to the Inn", to that common world of work and vision in which they had lived together, it will always keep its memories of the lost comrade:

So it's Back to the Inn! for me,
Where my great friend and I were happy and free.
And I will remember his beautiful words and his ways,
For the rest of my days.

"The Deserted Inn" also recalls the other days that have become sacred for the memory of things that time will not bring together again. It is a theme which Carman treats genially in his native vein of mystical reverie framed in allegory. It begins like "Behind the Arras" with the idea of a dwelling haunted by ghostly presences and memories, and repeats, of course, some of its details, with pleasant variations however:

I came upon a sudden door,
Which gave me no reply;
The more I questioned it, the more
A questioner was I.

I lingered by the mouldy stair,
And by the dusty sill;
And when my faint heart said, "Beware!"
The silence said, "Be still!"

From room to room I caught the stir
Of garments vanishing,—
The stillness trying to demur,
When one has ceased to sing.

The inn has been the house of unworldly souls lured by the ideal vision into a quest of perfection:

Did beauty in a half-made song,
A smile of mystery,
Departing, leave you here too long
For what could never be,—

And thenceforth you were friends of peace,
Acquainted with unrest,
Whom no perfection could release
From the unworldly quest?

The allegory then expands into something too vague for specific interpretation, but suggestive in general of the inevitable loss and pain that shadow human life. Then in the closing stanzas the poet suddenly takes us down from these solemn altitudes to drop us into Cytherea's car on its way to the isles:

> And from that dwelling of the night,
> With the gray dusk astir,
> I waited for the first gold light
> To let me forth to Her.

All Carman is in that piece; the fine reverie, the choice phrase, the wandering allegory with its delicate music growing ever vaguer into the skies, and the peculiar, perhaps doubtful, intrusion of the new tone at the end—not quite so fine a discord as Heine's ironic tail-sting. There is a similar blending of notes, but more harmoniously done in "On The Stairs". Carman's lighter verse is as remarkable for its witty readiness of turn as his graver is for its rich metaphor and the imaginative reach of its phrase. His style never lacks colour; it is not so rich in reflective tones or the language of critical thought. Grace and ease of movement too are native to his verse. His rhythm is always alive and is adjusted with fine tact to his theme. He keeps strictly within the established metrical schemes and is very regular in his use of accent with a strong tendency to the end-stopped line or couplet, but there is a spontaneity and vitality in his movement which is very distinct from mere formal accomplishment in versification. The mould is fixed and regular but the singing quality in his verse makes it a rhythmical crea-

tion. One could take examples at random almost from this little volume alone. The plaintive elegiac cadences of "Philip Savage", the mellow tones of "The City in the Sea", the challenging half ironic accents of "A Modern Eclogue", the well-felt movement of "The Lost Comrade", a rare experiment in free verse; the satirical verse of "The Sceptics", with its initial rhythms sending little waves of mystery into the air answered by sharp snapping notes from the tree and the clod; the light lilt of "May and June", the dancing accents of "Berris Yare"; the words are a poetic delirium, but the accents are impassioned, a reversion to Poe's style of obscure suggestion by haunting melodies. There is less individuality in the pentameter blank verse he uses occasionally in a reflective type of poem like "A Mountain Gateway", "Morning in the Hills", "Pan in the Catskills"; it is smoothly handled but monotonous, a meditative monotone always similar in its accents, descriptive traits, and moral reflections, woodland solitude and the thrushes at their hymns

> Flooding the earth with beauty and with joy
> And all the ardours of creation old.

VI

THE PIPES OF PAN

i *From the Book of Myths*

THERE are some poems in the third volume of the Vagabondia songs which suggest that Carman was feeling his way towards new forms of composition and invention. His imaginative vision has not really a great range, it is too mystically bound and circumscribed for that, but as an artist he is rather versatile and fond of trying himself in new themes and tones. The "Man with the Tortoise", for example, in the third Vagabondia volume, though it is still in Browning's manner, is a departure from his usual lyrical style in the direction of a dramatic monologue which brings the everyday world before us in its social movement, and it is followed later by other poems of the same type. He was now forty, an age when the artist naturally begins to turn a calmly critical eye on his methods and resources, and was evidently seeking for stronger, more epical forms of construction than his old mystical lyric and meditative elegy. And what is particularly in his mind at this time is some large constructive scheme as a sort of framework for his cosmic philosophy in which he could collect all its scat-

tered lights and assemble them in a comprehensive whole. This is obviously the purpose of the five volumes in the *Pipes of Pan* series, but as his faculty is essentially lyrical and unsuited to continuous construction of an epical character, the work takes the form of an extensive series of independent poems mostly short and much varied in style and tone, ranging over a vast variety of subjects but all designed to illustrate the great theme. The fundamental idea is that of a transcendental pantheism so eclectic that it finds an equal place for all the high traditions of humanity, Christian or Pagan, ancient or modern, for the mythical legend as well as for the conceptions of modern science. Man is part of the universe of nature and has to take his position in its general scheme, but this universe is a spiritual and mystical fact as well as a material one. Nature in this sense is the creative soil from which all things issue, the spiritual activities of man alike with what seem lower forms of plant and animal life. At times it comes near being the old idea of Mother Earth as the all-bearer which the current evolutionary science of that time favoured, although now it seems more uncertain as to what distant undefined etheric power may be contributing to great Mother Gaia's fertility. In its cosmic origin the ideal world must have the same validity as the real, mysticism and naturalism cease to be at variance, the urge of the senses and the high call of the spirit are to be comprehended as a harmony, a transcendental harmony in which the conflicting and fragmentary aspect of the world disappears. *The Pipes of Pan* is to be an Orphic song illustrating this unity of

meaning in nature and the spiritual history of man. All the voices of Mother Gaia are equally authentic and authoritative, the mute speech of the tree and the sod, the cry of the heart, the aspirations of the soul in the dreams of the saints and the revelation from Patmos. This form of thought has always been, as we have seen, the inspiration of his serious poetry. It is the old transcendental elevation of vision:

> Out from the heart of nature rolled
> The burdens of the Bible old.

But the attempt to illustrate it in detail encounters so many conflicting manifestations and antinomies of thought that the fundamental idea tends to become a high monotonous abstraction which throws no light on the distinctive character of things, or it loses itself in the representation of that diversity. It might indeed be used poetically to throw a certain Hegelian light on the progress of the Idea in humanity if the poet had both Hegel's eye for the evolution of thought in history and Heredia's tact and erudition in selection. In Carman's plan, however, the materials are not well kept together. The constructive design has that loose character so common in his work and does not keep the general idea in clear relief. In fact after the first book he almost abandons the attempt to preserve artistic or organic unity and contents himself with a fragmentary, highly arbitrary kind of illustration which allows the series to become little more than a miscellaneous collection.

But in the first volume at least there is a clear indica-

tion of his design and of the philosophic groundwork on which it rests. Here he avails himself quite ingeniously of the old Pan myth to symbolize the mystical confluence of Earth and Spirit in nature and man. It is a new cult of Pan with the novel expansions required to make the old Greek deity an up-to-date figure in Carman's cosmology. There are some introductory stanzas, however, which address themselves more obscurely to an "Overlord" who might be a distinct form of power, although in the body of the poem Pan absorbs all possible activity of function on the earth. The verses constitute a sort of invocation in which the Overlord is addressed in successive stanzas as "Lord of the grass and hill", "Lord of the rain", "Lord of the blade and leaf", "Lord of the storm and lull", etcetera, and then in a different style of characterisation as the "White Overlord of will", "the sheer Overlord of grief", "the master of doom". It is a loose unselective catalogue which might go on indefinitely, and the poet concludes it by professing himself "the breath the whim and the word" of this Power;

> Lord of the haunted bush,
> Where raptures throng
> I am thy hermit thrush,
> Ending no song.

After that we have the title poem, "The Pipes of Pan." It begins with one of the light later legends attached to the myth, the story of Pan's pursuit of the nymph, Syrinx, and the invention of the shepherd's pipe. Carmen tells it in lightly turned couplets with moderniz-

ing touches which give the classical nymph the lively reality of the summer-girl:

(Ah, the dare-to-love she was,
In her summer-fervid dress
Of sheer love and loveliness!)
Wayward, melting, shy and fond,
Lissome as a bulrush wand,
Fresh as meadow-sweet new-blown, . . .

Pan loses her amongst the reeds, as the story went, and the poet moralizes the incident very prettily and ingeniously into a universal form of experience:

So the chase has always proved;
And Pan never yet has loved,
But the loved one all too soon
Merged in music and was gone,—
Melted like a passing strain,
Vanished like a gust of rain
Or a footfall of the wind,
Leaving not a trace behind.

Then Pan cuts a reed, fashions it into the shepherd's pipe and blows—

Such a music as was played
Never yet since earth was made.

Here the poet changes his speech to the personal "I" while he describes the ecstatic reaction of the soul to this new born music.

Slowly I came back to poise,—
A new self with other joys,
Other raptures than before,
Harming less and helping more,
I could strive no more for gain;
Being was my true domain,
And the smiling peace that ever
In the end outruns endeavour.

Then comes the main part of the poem which deals with the music of Pan and the significance of the myth in a way that is certainly not wanting in novelty.

Pan, the old Arcadian god of the woods and the herds had no great place in Greek poetry of the best period, though Pindar, who was a Boeotian, built a shrine for his cult in some connection with that of the Mighty Mother. But the goat-footed deity of Arcadia shows a singular capacity for growth, not only in later Greece, but with our modern poets who have almost made a modern deity of him, a symbol of life joy in man and nature alike, of the universal desire of fulfilment and growth. Even our prose writers like to refer to him as the symbol of an ecstatic rhythm felt in the harmonies and perhaps also in the terrors of nature's scenes and sounds. Stevenson, in an essay of fine neo-classical fancy, describes his music as the indwelling charm and terror of the universe. And our novelists are not behind in the modern development of the cult. "Have you heard of Pan's pipes? Is not nature the mother and nurse of us all?" So the young man with the pince-nez and the open-work socks asks of stolid farmer Reuben who loved the soil so. "I have not, young man", farmer Reuben replies. But the girl in the embroidered frock understood: "I once stayed on the Downs", she says, "and one twilight I seemed to hear elfin music on the hill. I tore off my shoes and let down my hair and I danced—I danced". So Sheila Kaye-Smith, who has a fine instinct in such things, represents the music of Pan.[1] Henley, in his

[1] *In Sussex Gorse.*

London Voluntaries, takes him away from his fields and mountains altogether and plants him in the midst of Picadilly crowds as a symbol of the call of nature there. But in Carman, whose cosmic imagination disdains limits, he becomes not only all that the All-Pan of late Greek philosophy was, but some thing more, he is identified with all the still sad music of humanity, he is a symbol of the religion of sorrow, of the travail and groaning with which all creation awaits redemption.

All there is of human woe
Pan has fathomed long ago.
All of sorrow, all of ill
Kindly Pan remembers still;
Disappointment, grief, disdain,
Stifled impulse and bleak pain,—
Pan has learned them; Pan has known
Hurts and passions of his own.

Thus Pan knows the secret hid
Under the Great Pyramid;
Why young lovers for their love
Think the stars are light enough,
. . . . . .
Here is Pan's green flower, the earth,
He has tended without dearth,
Brought to blossom, fruit and seed
By the sap's imperious need,
. . . . . .
Sap of tree and pith of man,
Ah, but they are dear to Pan!
Not a creature stirs or moves,
But Pan heartens and approves;
Not a being loves or dies,
But Pan knows the sacrifice.
Man or stripling, wife or maid,
Pan is ever by to aid;
And no harm can come to you,
But his great heart feels it, too.

Carman's poetry often suffers from loose excursions of the imagination, but in this case it is the need for poetical illustration of his metaphysical idea which is driving him into an extravagant expansion of the Pan myth. But there are also lines in the poem which are a graceful expression of the authentic tradition or something which is nearly related to it in modern thought:

> As the mountain twilight stole
> Through the woods from bole to bole,
> A dumb warder setting free
> Every shy divinity,
> I became aware of each
> Presence, aspen, bass and beach,
> And they all found voice and made
> A green music in the shade.
>
> Therefore, therefore, mortal man,
> When ye hear the pipes of Pan
> Marvel not that they should hold
> Something sad and calm and old,
> Like an eerie minor strain
> Running through the strong refrain.

Poets have a license in such matters, but Carman's handling of Pan whether it is metaphysically defensible or not, makes him an amorphous figure for poetry. To credit him with the secrets in the Great Pyramid and the spiritual suffering of the *Via Dolorosa* is not only, technically, a bad case of what the classical philologers call contamination, it takes him beyond imaginative recognition and sympathy.

"A Young Pan's Prayer" seems by its title to continue the treatment of the old Greek myth but it is really an allegory of the poet's own spiritual aspirations. The

spirit of Nature is invoked to sustain his song with emanations from "the calm of the hills and the strength of the sea". The young Pan prays to be made a man "as only your earthly music can" and then to find new stops in that earthly music, to possess

> The wiser will
> That foregoes self-will
> And aspires to truth beyond trammel or ill.

Incidentally the poet makes the high claim to have pulled out some new stops in the music of nature.

There is a further treatment of the Pan myth in the poem of "Marsyas", who as a Silenus or Satyr was amongst the followers of Pan. Marsyas is made a symbol of the evolution of music in general and the rustic music of the Arcadian pipe disdained in the great Greek contests is made representative of all its heavenly harmonies:

> All of beauty, all of knowledge, all of wonder, fused and caught
> In the rhythms of the music, weaving out of sense and thought
> And a touch of love the fabric out of which the world was wrought.
> . . . . . .
> And love like a vernal fever, dyed him with its scarlet stain.

The style there is inflated, an ecstatic kind of commonplace, taking the place of intimate interpretation. And the style is inflated because Carman's whole treatment of the Pan legend is too formless and vaguely general to give him intimate points of contact. Modernisations of Greek and other antique myths are tempting because they have an ideal background already set for the poet

or artist, and a poetic atmosphere capable of being pleasantly renewed by modern thought. But to preserve a true sense of antiquity and at the same time enlarge it to a modern interpretation of life requires a combination of thought, learning and art which is rare. Of course the poet may choose to remain strictly within the classical framework of the myth, as Roberts does in his "Marsyas", but its statuesque objectivity and classical restraint are fully appreciable only by those who would appreciate an antique *basso-relievo*.

There is nothing more in the first volume which deals with the music of Pan except in the sense in which Pan has absorbed into himself all the light, joy, and passion of life. "Daphne" is an Apolline legend, another story of a god's pursuit of a nymph. It has a few classical allusions in it to the Dorian dew and the Cyprian Mother, but is really a modern love lyric in which the poet displaces apologetically the relentless ardour of the god for a gentler form of wooing in the style of the Italian or Elizabethan pastoral.

> But I to thee
> More gently fond would be,
> Nor less a lover woo thee with soft words
> And woodland melody.
> . . . . . .
> Tell these old tales
> Of love, that still avails
> More than all mighty things in this great world,
> Still wonderworks nor fails.

But when he gets out of the philosophical entanglements of the Pan myth, he recovers his vitality. The subjects he

chooses have no connection, natural or æsthetic, with the tradition of Pan except in the sense that all forms of love from the Sapphic Eros to Christian *caritas* are part of the music of Pan in Carman's view. "The Lost Dryad" is a kind of Sapphic plaint written in a modernized form of the Sapphic stanza, unrhymed dactylics with the Adonic close. Carman uses it with a natural accent and smoothness of movement. It became his favourite metre in the Sappho volume which he published some years later.

"At Phædra's Tomb" is a lyrical meditation on the story of Phædra's mad passion for Hippolytus. Carman has here a well defined story with the support of Euripides and an abundance of literary tradition to steady his course. He does not add much to the psychology of Phædra but he gets some fine elegiac notes into the old tale, the pure romantic pathos of the older lyric. The opening lines are perfect in this way:

> What old gray ruin can this be,
> Beside the blue Saronic sea?
> What tomb is this, what temple here,
> Thus side by side so many a year?

So also later on:

> How blue that midday shadow is
> In the white dust of Argolis! . . .
> This is her tomb. . . . See, near at hand,
> This myrtle! Here she used to stand
> Those days when her love-haunted eyes
> Saw her new-builded hope arise.

Perhaps it is as a corrective to the Pagan associations of Pan and the erotic flavour of Sapphic song that Carman

at the end of this curious collection has added a poem on the conversion of Olaf of Norway to Christianity, "The Tidings to Olaf". It is meant, no doubt, to represent the expansion of Pan under Christian influences but it makes rather an odd and fragmentary addition to the old Greek legends. The priest of Thor descants on the honour and power that the Norse kings have won by favour of their old war-god, and "the pale dark monk" replies urging the merits of Christian teaching. The story is told fluently enough in the style of moral rhetoric Carman uses on uninspired occasions.

> . . . Olaf, all these things, these goods which thy priest proclaims,
> That make thee a lord among men, and give thee a name above names,
>
> Are gifts of the spirit of love. Take away love, and thy throne
> Melts like a word on the air; thou art a name unknown.

There is nothing of the old Norse atmosphere about the poem, the incidents are not historical and the Christian principles of love and peace had little to do with Olaf's manner of propagating his religion in Norway which, like that of the Mahommedan caliphs, was simple and summary: "Get baptized or die".

There are five volumes of the *Pipes of Pan* published at various intervals from 1902 to 1905. A general view of their contents indicates Carman's comprehensive design of illustrating the evolution of human culture in its æsthetic and religious aspects, and the collective title alone would suggest that the whole process was to be regarded from a high philosophic point of view as the world-music of nature. But the scheme is too vast for

Carman to give it a clear logical development or any unity of artistic treatment. The symbolism of the Pan poems in the first volume has little or no harmonic continuation in the variety of tones and treatment in the other volumes. Carman's great lyrical variety leaves no room for that epical wholeness of tone and vision which would give interior harmony and artistic relief to the design. The fundamental idea itself of Pan's music as a world-process reveals itself fitfully and obscurely at times in a medley which contains everything from pantheistic hymns and cosmic idealizations of Pan and Ishtar, love lyrics and spring songs, fragments of Indian and Norse legend, to prayers to the Overlord and pious marvels from French Canadian history. Of course there are good things in the collection, light-winged stanzas in Carman's best manner which future anthologers are not likely to overlook in their search for the gems of the Canadian lyric, but there are no poems in it great and distinctive enough to have made even the well disposed Canadian public realize the great design. One would not have minded some laxity and even inconsequence in such a series, if there had been something strong and genial enough to fix the design unforgettably. I can give only a few samples of the way in which Carman has sought to carry it out.

ii *Green Book of the Bards*

The *Green Book of the Bards*, published in 1903, forms the second volume of the *Pipes of Pan* series. The romantic title—Carman's titles vie with those of "Fiona

Macleod" in poetic suggestion—covers a collection of nature lyrics, mostly spring songs. There is nothing in them which has any particular association with bards famous in history, but in the title poem we have a poetic review of poets and prophets who have sought their inspiration in the green book of nature. It displays the almost formless vastitude of Carman's design.

> For who could ever tire
> Of that wild legendry,
> The folk-lore of the mountains,
> The drama of the sea?
>
> I pore for days together
> Over some lost refrain,—
> The epic of the thunder,
> The lyric of the rain.
> . . . . . .
>
> Here Amiel in sadness,
> And Burns in pure delight,
> Sought for the hidden import
> Of man's eternal plight.
> . . . . . .
>
> The sweet Chaucerian temper,
> Smiling at all defeats;
> The gusty moods of Shelley,
> The autumn calms of Keats.
>
> Here were derived the gospels
> Of Emerson and John;
> 'Twas with this revelation
> The face of Moses shone.

The verse trips along smoothly as always in Carman, but the style is fluffy with Carman's usual *clichés* and rather weak in the characterization of the poets. Carman does not forget to carve his own name at the foot of this pillar

of fame, I hardly know whether to say in small or in large letters:

> One page, entitled Grand Pré,
> Has the idyllic air
> That Bion must have envied:
> I set a foot-note there.

No doubt our sense of idyllic nature has deepened in some respects since the days of the Sicilian Muses.

Most of the other poems in the volume are varieties of Carman's spring song. "Spring Magic" is the usual avatar of the Absolute, manifesting itself in phenomena, "I pass into the colour and fragrance of the flowers", "I thrill in crimson quince-buds", "I fade in silver music from the throats of the frogs." "April Weather" is a facile catalogue, "Soon the rosy maples budding", . . . "Soon, ah soon the budding windflowers", . . . "Soon about the walking uplands the hepaticas in blue", . . . "Soon the frogs in silver chorus", . . . soon "the nomad longing" and so on. In "The Word in the Beginning" and in "Sursum Corda", the same spring phenomena are grouped under the leadership of the Winds. In the one The Word, "the long Aprilian cry" comes with the Winds of the South and West, moving the People of the Water, the People of the Air and the People of the Ground to come forth and take their joy of nature; in the other, it comes with the wind on the field and the wind on the sea, and the wind on the hills and the wind on the street. In "A Creature Catechism", it is first the flying fish, then the butterfly then the maple seed then the

frog who all sing in turn the thrill which spring sends through the tribes of the sea and the air and the field and the ground. It is always the same thing, with a little variation and interchange of phrases, the revel of the leaves, the riot of the sap, the "word" or the "summons" or the "rumour" that goes abroad, "the myriad wings atremble" or "the myriad marshy pipers", "the myriad stir of the mould", the rapture of birds and brooks, the shy wood-flowers the blossom of the maple or the apple tree, the nomad longing, and for moral colouring "the dominance of beauty" and "the love that abides", Carman has sung all that scores of times in varying phrases and with some slight alteration of the framework of the poem. Even "The Madness of Ishtar", which seems by its title to promise something novel in the way of recalling the great cult of the Assyrian Aphrodite with local colour perhaps from the ancient Babylon or Nineveh, turns out to be only a slightly varied framework for the old spring phenomena. We move again through the usual assemblage of American flora and fauna, the arbutus and willow and maple, the wood-birds, the frogs and the flicker, without anything that opens the hot Syrian sky for us.

Odour of tulip and cherry,
Scent of the apple blow,
Tang of the wild arbutus—
These to her crucible go.

Honey of lilac and willow,
The spoil of plundering bees,
Savour of sap from the maples—
What will she do with these?

The answer is in Carman's airiest style:

> She will gather the broken music,
> Fitting it chord by chord,
> Till the hearer shall learn the meaning,
> As a text that has been restored.
>
> She will gather the fragrance of lilacs,
> The scent of the cherry flower,
> And he who perceives it shall wonder,
> And know, and remember the hour.
>
> She will gather the moonlight and starshine,
> And breathe on them with desire,
> And they shall be changed on the moment
> To the marvel of earth's green fire.

Alliteration and anaphora give a formal vigour to the verse, and the old notes of the spring song are freshened up a little by mystical hyperbole, but there is nothing new in the vision.

It is really rather amazing, the fundamental monotony of note in Carman's spring lyrics and in his nature poetry in general. Even the same terms and phrases, the same examples and illustrations are used over and over again in some slightly varied combination. But amongst so many exercises of imagination on the same subject, Carman is sure to have some which will be a more purified product. In this volume there are three poems which describe the call of spring to the tribes of the sea. There are fine images in "The Word in the Beginning", but he reaches the perfect picture in "Sursum Corda":

> There passed more vague than a shadow
> Which is then no more,
> The aura and draft of being,
> Like a breath through an open door.

The myriad fins are moving,
The marvellous flanges play;
Herring and shad and menhaden,
They stir and awake and away.

Carman's ideology is that of the symbolist whose impressions of some divine essence or import in things are vivid but reflect little of their external variety. Many of his nature poems hardly fix themselves in the memory as distinct compositions. The cosmic vision of nature which dominates his imagination has always the same highly schematic way of regarding things and is apt to use much the same phrases and images whether it descends on the hill or the meadow, on the tribes of the sea or the tribes of the air. It is always some aura of serene enchantment, or haunting cadence, some shy secret of solitude and silence, or some cosmic nisus of nature through which he sees the object and pictures it. The rain is purple or white and the waters are purple or green according as it falls in with the cosmic sentiment of the poet at the time. It is a kind of symbolism which lacks variety in its manner and needs to be used with artistic economy. But Carman is a reckless prodigal in this respect. No doubt there was much in the external conditions of his career which made him negligent in this matter. He is one of the few poets who have managed to live almost entirely by their verses. That has meant constant production for him. He is the most industrious of our poets. He was very late in starting, but once started there are no long silences in his career. After his first volume in 1893, a new book of verse comes every

year from his hands, sometimes two or three, besides single sheets, selections, definitive editions and prose essays. It is only after 1916 that he begins to think of giving Pegasus a breathing space. Some of his poems, especially those in the *Behind the Arras* volume, are of the kind that require a more strenuous form of thought, and in many the toil of workmanship and of imaginative effort could not have been small. But his work in general does not give us the impression of much preparative thought or of long incubative periods, such as even prolific Brownings or Hugos have, during which the poetic drafts lie long in the desk and arrive slowly with much rumination and revising at all the perfection the poet can give them. Even his best work shows too many hurried or careless strokes for that, and too much looseness in composition. His volumes are partly collections of poems originally written for the magazines, and probably the habit of writing a light type of verse for periodicals has something to do with Carman's constant repetitions of note and some laxities in his workmanship. The American point of view is insistently "Keep yourself before the public". It is an excellent maxim for the business side of life, but the artist has to keep in mind also the truth in Goethe's saying, "A talent ripens best in the quiet". Carman had not much choice anyway, if the breakfast coffee and eggs were to be kept up to standard quality. What more natural when a sunny hour revived old emotions and thoughts about the blossom of spring and the thrush's song than to give them a new dressing in eight or ten stanzas and despatch the product to a

friendly editor with the certainty, or almost, of securing ten or twenty dollars for a needy exchequer. Our modern lyric is not as exacting in its technique as a Pindaric ode, and a few neatly turned verses in the current *clichés* of the day could readily find their half-page in the magazines and might even appear next year again with a little redressing in language and metre, and no harm done, to the public at least. But is not a school of perfection for the poet himself this too intimate association with journalism. "Unless we are read today, we shall never be read again," said a famous London editor by way of apology for the exaggeration of his style and tone. I think it was the same editor (Sir E. T. Cook) who said, that the best way to stand the worry and responsibilities of journalism was not to take it too seriously. That may very well be the temper which enables a successful writer of leading articles to get through his trying work, but it is another kind of discipline that perfects the artist. He cannot afford to do anything except at his best.

But though Carman exposes the same devices and delicacies of his art with too much iteration in his spring songs and similar compositions, they express such a happy exuberance of joy and confidence in nature's divine message, so often attested too by descriptive touches in which one feels an intimate truth, that there are few of them one would wish away. In this volume there are a number of small lyrics "The Breath of the Reed", "Poppies", "A Forest Shrine", "A Heretic", and some others which set forth his cosmic creed with pleasing variations. No doubt the confidence they express, that the black-

bird's song or the beauty of a flower is a sufficient answer to any doubts about the value of life, has a special reference here to the music of Pan and his mystical omnipresence. But the connection is not made imperative on the reader.

Through that unfrequented portal,
When the twilight winds are low,
Messengers of things immortal
    Come and go;

Whispers of a rumour hidden
From slow reason, and revealed
To the child of beauty bidden
    Far afield;

Hints of rapture rare and splendid
Furnished to the heart of man,
As if, where mind's journey ended,
    Soul's began;

. . . . . .

Argue me, "There is no gateway
In this great wall we explore,"
Till there comes a bird-note; straightway,
    There's the door!

Enter here, thou beauty-lover,
The domain where soul resides;
Ingress thought could not discover,
    Sense provides.

—"A Forest Shrine"

The feeling for nature in such poems may not seem to differ greatly from what one finds often enough in Wordsworth, but between the two there is the difference that exists between a mystical and a rational transcendentalism, though the two may be freely mingled in poetry as they are by Carman. The English poet's faith is

firm that in this "language of the ancient earth" we have intimations of "The Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe", but he speaks with more philosophic caution of that uncertain element, the "auxiliar light" which comes from man's mind, and he is unwilling to make any dangerous severance between reason and the æsthetic sense. His nature poetry reflected the great critical philosophy of his time which felt the pressure of mystical feeling and weighed it but would not surrender itself unreservedly to it. Wordsworth, it is true, is often pressing towards the utmost confines of the knowable and occasionally passing them by force, as he says, "of consciousness not to be subdued": He can say firmly enough we are "breathings for incommunicable powers", but his philosophy of nature remains on the whole rationally definite and refuses to make a mystical hypostasis of nature's phenomena except as a speculative fancy. When he is serious he gives the alternative

> I saw them feel
> Or linked them to some feeling.[1]

In later poets like Rossetti and Morris there was a less definite philosophy of nature but more of a mystical fancy that hovered between poetic metaphor and serious interpretation. The sensuous richness of their poetry was relieved and spiritualized by a vaguely mystical depth of feeling for life. The murmur of the sea-shell "mourning its parent shore" which had been but a poetic fancy in Leyden and the older poets becomes in Rossetti the symbolical sigh of "the desire and mystery" which is at

[1] *Prelude,* Book 3.

the heart of nature. The sound of the sea is "Time's self made audible", "secret continuance sublime".[2] All fine feeling becomes an ache of desire or want. The phrase is habitually intense with the effort to express this exquisite and mysterious essence of life; especially in his erotic poetry. There the metaphors are like hounds in implacable pursuit; there is no hiding place. The "very sky and sea-line of her soul", and the

> . . . sweet signs that flee
> About her soul's immediate sanctuary

must be exposed.

Rosetti led the way into the mystical ecstatic. Half an Italian, he has as his birthright the Italian fullness of phrase and a sensuous religiosity that can still give mediæval legend and superstition poetic charm, but he has not that finer mysticism of the North which is a kind of imaginative metaphysic. For that you must go to the American transcendentalists with their constant sense of an Oversoul manifesting itself in nature and the mind of man. But this form of thought remained highly rational in them in its way of interpreting things, because it was too reverent, too Puritan to admit toying with artistic or speculative fancy. In the symbolist schools which followed there was a much freer play of the æsthetic imagination. In W. B. Yeats, for example, poetry has begun to challenge more openly the right of reason to set bounds to its interpretation of nature. In its search for a mystical essence in things it tended to set aside the commoner aspects of nature; its ideal was to bring us only the

[2] "The Sea Limits."

finer, fainter music of a world hidden from the grosser sense.

Carman's feeling for nature as well as his philosophy attach him to the symbolist school. But his symbolism is not so pure in expression as that of Yeats, nor so austerely rational as that of the Emersonian transcendentalists, but is freely mixed with commoner elements, strong romantic metaphor, personification and allegory which often give it an excessively romantic character.

The voice of the hermit thrush or the cry of the seagull has a meaning which the poet would devote his life to learn and which long ages after this men will just be beginning to understand.[1] The golden meaning of the aspen's whisper, lost long ago "when the world was young", is something the poet must seek till he dies.[2] The tall white daisies rock with ecstasy in the wind and solve the question of immortality for him:

> They gave me no more need to ask
> How immortality is named;
> For I remembered like a dream
> How ages since my spirit flamed
> To wear their guise and dance with them.[3]

The purple mountains are "mysterious conjurors" sending "in silent premonition their still shadows by our doors". The reeds and the grasses confer together and receive a sign. That is the "green book" in which the poet would read. Its word is that of the Holy Ghost for him. So he speaks in a pleasant little confessional poem, "The Heretic".

[1] "The Breath of the Reed." [2] "Among the Aspens."
[3] "The Dancers of the Field."

One whisper of the Holy Ghost
Outweighs for me a thousand tomes;
And I must heed that private word,
Not Plato's, Swedenborg's, nor Rome's.

The voice of beauty and of power
Which came to the beloved John,
In age upon his lonely isle,
That voice I will obey, or none.

. . . . . .

Let me have brook and flower and bird
For counsellors, that I may learn
The very accent of their tongue,
And its least syllable discern.

. . . . . .

Be others worthy to receive
The naked messages of God;
I am content to find their trace
Among the people of the sod.

You see the cosmic breadth of vision which brings together the cult of nature and the spirit of prophecy in St. John. You can compare its logic with that of Emerson in "The Problem".

iii *Songs of the Sea-Children*

Carman is not much of an erotic poet in the usual sense of the words. The shy love lyric we occasionally get from him is so interfused with nature feeling, or boding fancy, or some element of mystery in the situation that the erotic chord is hardly felt. It is mostly a delicate little idyll in which the presence of the white moonlight in the trees, or the rose garden, or the roaming wind at the door, does as much to quicken the poet's

fancy as the presence of Gwendolen or Daphne. It is little more than an agreeable variety of his nature lyric. But in the third book of the Pipes of Pan series, entitled *Songs of the Sea-children*, his erotic sentiment gets a curious reinforcement from the cosmic sense of life which is meant to dominate more or less in the whole series. Man has to accept his position as part of the nisus of nature. The emotion of love is treated as the beautiful, half-inconscient surge of nature which has its rights along with the movement of winds and tides and the vitality of impulses in the sea-bird's flight. The surge of cosmic being takes hold of the loved one, just as it does in the song of the hermit thrush, or the quiver of the aspen leaves.

For when she said, "I love you,"
It was as when the tide
Yearns for the naked moonlight,
An unreluctant bride.

And when she said, "Ah, leave me,"
It was as when the sea
Sighs at the ebb, or a spent wind
Dies in the aspen tree.

That is from Song LXXIX. And here is Song XXI:

All the zest of all the ages
Shimmers in my sea-bird's wing
Flickering above the surges
Of the sea.

All the quiet of the ages
Slumbers in my sea-bird's wing,
Where it settles down the verges
Of the sea.

All the questing soul's behesting
Pent and freed in one white wing,
Joying there above the dirges
Of the sea.

Be thou, sweetheart, such a sweetheart!
All the valour of the spring
Crowds thy pulses with the urges
Of the sea.

The colouring is novel for a love lyric, but in this volume Carman's verse has an evident relation to the erotic Pan of tradition who has even acquired a new scientific reality in modern poetry clearly reflected in Carman's sentiment which is often a good deal warmer in expression than is usual with him; it has at times even a Swinburnian emphasis ("with the hot red mouth where a man might drown"); but that is only a casual element in the general delicacy of feeling and treatment which are natural to him.

Sometimes there is a slight idyllic setting to the piece, two lovers loitering in the woods or something like that, but mostly it is just a lyrical sigh, two or three stanzas breathed into space. The verse is generally in light quatrains, and the rhythm has his usual ease of workmanship. One feels that the erotic note has not much depth, it is only fancy caressing the idea of love. But here and there when he exchanges amorous languors for the malicious gaiety of Vagabondia song, his style has all the charm of impromptu.

She had the tender bearing
Of daffodils in spring;
And I had sense enough to know
Love is a fleeting thing.

She had the heart of tinder;
I had the lips of flame;
And neither of us ever heard
Procrastination's name.

She had the soft demeanour
Discreet as any nun's;
And each of us had all the joy
God gives his foolish ones.[1]

iv *Songs from a Northern Garden*

Songs from a Northern Garden, the fourth volume of the Pipes of Pan series, seems designed to introduce specially Northern and Canadian features into this representation of Pan's harmonies in the universe. I find the collection difficult to characterize as a whole, Carman's muse being here a rather wandering and wayward lady. The first poem is an overwrought fantasy. The soft rain-wind is personified as "Our Lady of the Rain" and credited with qualities and experiences which are just the same old things Carman has said about the attributes of Pan and Mother Nature and Spring and April.

Her look is soft with dreaming
On old forgotten years;
Her eyes are grave and tender
With unpermitted tears
For she has known the sorrows
Of all this weary earth,
Yet ever brings its gladness
Retrieval and new birth!

She has attended the evolution of man and has known all the sorrows of eath. She has brought rejoicing to Baby-

[1] Song LXVII.

lon and Ur and been worshipped at Tyre and Sidon etcetera, etcetera,

> And all who hear her summons
> Must answer to her will;
> For she will not abandon
> The old Pandean strain
> That called the world from chaos—
> Our Lady of the Rain.

It might just as well be our lady of the sunshine, or the dew, or the light and all the rest of it; there is no logical differentiation in these wide abstractions. It is an empty frictionless world in which Carman moves with fatal facility and monotonous reiteration. There may be momentary flashes from its vague horizons but his hazardous adventures in this line do more than anything else to weaken the impression of serious thinking in his poetic cosmism. For that which gives weight to the words of a poet is that the reader feels they come from a clear depth of experience which he has learned to respect. That is why a line in Wordsworth or Browning, which taken in itself might not be better than a line in a lesser singer, arrests our ear and bends the mind submissively to ponder its depth.

The *Songs from a Northern Garden* are filled with notes very familiar to the reader of Carman. In "Above the Gaspereau", we have once more the serene fluting of the thrush, the piping of the frog in the marsh, and the rainbirds at twilight, and are admonished to give love lest the spirit grow stale, and to learn patience from the firs and to discern in the life of our brother the beech and our sister the fern the truth that "death is but a

door to new being". The patience and silence of "our brothers of the orchard and hill, the unhurrying trees" are likened to the prayers of the saints that St. John saw ascending to Him that sat on the throne. To Carman the apocalyptic visions of Patmos are an equation with the humble growth of Mother Earth, the grades of reality that gave Bradley and even Spinoza so much to do trouble him not; he concludes bravely;

> Saith the riddle, "The parts are all plain; ye may guess at the whole."
> I guess, "Immortality, knowledge, survival of Soul,"

When he writes in a certain high didactic vein, Carman comes very much under the spell of Browning. The metrical mould of "Above the Gaspereau" is that of Browning's "Englishman in Italy", though the verse line is differently arranged and the dramatic accent is not so sharp. The style too follows Browning in its brusque familiarities and vigour ("You, Londoner, walking in Bishopgate", . . . "All the while not a word from my sunflowers here on the hill". . . "the sun takes his fill of life in the orchards"). He can sustain Browning's peculiar form of meditative monologue admirably: Browning's comprehensive observation and swift side glances at things as well as his characteristic calls, apostrophes and arrests are maintained with a vigour of invention which is like that of original inspiration. So well can an ideal form in art inspire the matter. There are some two hundred and fifty lines in "Above the Gaspereau" written with a sustained animation which shows that the poet himself had no embarrassing sense of monotonous repeti-

tion, or of the obvious imitations of Browning, to make his wing flag. It is a rather naïve obliviousness, but one has to distinguish sharply between Carman's native gifts as a lyrical poet, and his more uncertain command of the reflective and philosophic elements in poetry. It is Browning also who inspires the form and tone of another high-thoughted poem, "The Word at St. Kavin's". It is in the style of that noble chant "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and announces the same triumphant optimism with the same compact vigour of phrase and driving hammer-beat of rhythm and rhyme. It is a poetic sermon on the usual text: "Back to the fair sweet way of Mother Nature". The poet is a thorough going evolutionist, of course, but with the faith that the scientific doctrine is quite reconcilable with all the spiritual traditions and hopes of humanity:

> For soul has led us now,
> Science unravels how,
> Through cell and tissue up from dust to man;
> And will lead by-and-by,
> No logic tells us why,
> To fill her purport in the ampler plan.
>
> Ah, trust the soul, my friends,
> To seek her own great ends
> Revealed not on the fashion of the hour!
> For she outlives intact
> The insufficient act,
> Herself the source and channel of all power.
>
> The soul survives unmarred,
> The mind care-worn and scarred,
> That still is anxious over little things,
> To come unto her own
> Through benefits unknown
> And the green beauty of a thousand springs.

We have the poet's word for it, with the usual supporting illustrations from his cosmic vision of the patience and calm and conformability to law of nature's growths:

> Behold the fir-trees, how unswerved they are!

But there is not always the weight of Browning's thought to support the tremendous emphasis of the style, and Carman sometimes pours the direst commonplace into the high rhythmical mould of "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

> All selfish gain at best
> Brings but profound unrest
> And inward loss, despite our loud professions.
> Think therefore what it is,
> What surety of bliss
> To be absolved from burdensome possessions!

"Christmas Eve at St. Kavin's" is another poetic sermon of sixty stanzas. The theme is the all-saving power of love in the world, the word being used this time mainly in the Scriptural sense, "Love One Another". Love has been substituted for fear and hate as the law of life, the poet tells us, with other things of the kind not very new but expressed with some novelty in his transcendental phrases. Carman's cosmic vision has become very pious in this volume, especially where he is dealing with French Canadian church legends, as is natural. The piety may not always be of a very orthodox type, especially when he remembers it has to be co-ordinated with the myth and music of Pan, but Carman makes valiant efforts to retain the familiar phrases of religious experience.

But He who walked with the world-soul
At twilight in Gethsemane,
Breathing among the listening boughs
Sweet prayers of charity,

Must daily with the wind return
About the dim world to renew
The trembling litanies of the leaves,
The blessings of the dew.

. . . . . .

I see Him in the orchard glooms,
Watching the russet apples tan
With the serene regard of one
Who is more God than man.

The cosmic life in nature and what it may suggest for human destiny, that of course is the theme of Orphic song, and since Goethe and Wordsworth, the poetry of nature had been tending in that direction. Transcendental philosophy and science alike had been deepening the foundations for it; great poets had been fashioning the language it required, and the mystical impressionism of artists like Rossetti, Yeats, and "Fiona Macleod", had spread the gift of tongues among the poets for the utterance of the obscure contacts the soul has with elemental harmonies in the universe. The sound of the wind among the reeds, the cry of the plover on the moor-land and the silence of the hills became ineffable communications. What were once rare and delicate chords in the poetry of the older masters were now the common notes of the modern lyre, sometimes common fingering on the guitar. Over here Carman was not only the clearest response to this new call of the time, but there is a distinctive individuality in his way of answering, and a general original-

ity in his treatment of themes, even if it is often somewhat compromised by obvious borrowings and reminiscences.

No doubt also the strong philosophic groundwork of his poetry in transcendental metaphysic led, as we have seen, to a certain fixity of ideas and a constant recurrence of the same images and illustrations. Whole stanzas could be transferred from one poem to the other without making any noticeable difference. The choice of illustrations becomes almost indifferent. It may equally well be the mountain-fir or the aster, the song of the thrush or the ocean current, that is to teach us the lesson of patience, or courage, or confidence, or whatever other virtue it may be. We miss a little in Carman's poetry of nature the disinterested vision and enjoyment of things for their own sake which makes Lampman's poetic rambles in the country so pleasing, and gives such body to Roberts's sketches of nature. But it is this form of thought which makes the world an intelligible and harmonious whole for him and gives courage to his poetic vision.

VII

THE SAPPHO LYRICS

The imaginative treatment of life in Carman's poetry has not much inward range or variety and is mostly confined to a few of its high-sounding and intenser chords, but he spreads it over a great variety of themes. His next enterprise was wanting neither in boldness nor novelty. He had published some dozen short lyrics in quasi-Sapphic style as a form of poetic homage to a friend; they had a reception which encouraged him to extend the work to something like a complete imaginative restoration of Sappho's love lyrics. To restore Sappho, the tenth Muse, as Plato calls her, and the supreme tradition in lyric poetry, and to do that from fragments which are not often more than a line or two preserved by some ancient grammarian to illustrate a figure of speech or a peculiarity of the Æolic dialect, or from texts so heavily mutilated that one wonders at the courage of the learned philologists who reconstruct them, conjecturally, into intelligibility, it is certainly one of the most perilous ventures in the whole field of poetry as Roberts says in his introduction to Carman's volume. One can conceive of a creative genius capable of entering into that naïve mediæval world of thought and senti-

ment which is Chaucer's, and completing his half-told tale and even venturing upon an untold one. The way that old poet looked at things, his naïve feeling for life and for nature, his naïve manner of treating history and fable are all so well marked for us, that we should know at once how much of Chaucer or how little we are getting. Goethe could even think of restoring the outlines of a lost drama of Euripides from data he judged to be not altogether insufficient. But Sappho! It is not only that we know so little of the social conditions of the sixth century B. C., we are even more in the dark as to the life of Sappho herself and as to her social relations with the people amongst whom she lived. Even her moral outlook on life and in particular the character of that erotic sentiment with which her name will ever be associated are not quite simple reading for us. There is unquestionably something obscure for us now in her erotic emotion, and it has been made more difficult to interpret as one would like to interpret Sappho, by a mass of later traditions which represent her life as the sport of wild passion and ending in despair and suicide. Much of that may be reasonably put aside like the story of Phaon, as a mere outgrowth of legend. But even if we pay no heed to such licensed jokers as the writers of Athenian comedy who were not likely to treat Sappho with more consideration than they did Socrates or Euripides, there is still something to consider at least in the fact that Sappho's character was a common subject of debate amongst Alexandrian and Roman scholars who knew all her books instead of the poor fragments we have to judge her by. It means

at any rate that whatever finer ethos existed in the feminine culture of her time and had been moulded in her Lesbian school into the fine conventions and hyperbole of poetic expression, had become unintelligible to them. For us the fragments we possess raise the question without giving us enough material to answer it fully. But though Sappho herself may leave us with riddles, the restorer has not the same privileges. He cannot complete her fragmentary verses without making himself an interpreter of the spirit in which they were written and of the quality of the sentiment they represent. And the erotic sentiment has so many distinct varieties ranging all the way from the mystic flame in Dante or the spirituality of Michel Angelo to the light loves of Horace and Béranger and the animal fire in Casanova, with well marked varieties between like the *tendresse* of the eighteenth century in France or the intellectual amours of feminine Romanticism in Germany. Its effect on the life and character is probably as decisive though not so easy to trace as that of ambition or greed. In the ancient Greek world, too, there were forms of erotic feeling which it is no longer easy to understand in their intensity and formal modes of manifesting themselves. Plato in his Symposium gives us a philosophic discourse on the forms of *eros* among men, but there is no Symposium written from the women's point of view, except what lies in the fragments of Sappho herself. Early Greek songs seem to be always devoted to the expression of a specific ideal in close connection with some aspect of their social life, as in Anacreon or Tyrtæus or Alcæus or Pindar. In Sappho it is

naturally a specifically feminine ideal, and we may be sure is in as close connection with the life and culture of the patrician women of her time as Pindar's odes are with that of Aeginetan nobles and the rulers of Sicilian cities, and as the songs of Tyrtæus are with the military discipline of Sparta. And of course in her effort to express the facts poetically, she would exalt the ideal in them and express it with poetic vehemence and hyperbole, perhaps also with some artistic affectations of style and sentiment which had become admired conventions in her feminine school of the Muses. The problem here is the same for the poetic restorer as it is for the scholar. He cannot altogether evade it by a general treatment of the emotion of love without falling into vagueness. He has to use his divining scholarship on the fragments, making the one help the other, and rounding off mere hints into possible situations and incidents. But local colour and verisimilitude are hard to get out of such morsels. How far he can venture to enlarge the range of his sentiment by treatment of love as it ordinarily exists between the sexes is a question of how far he can make us recognize Sappho in such situations. There is little or nothing of that in her fragments. Here he must depend upon the doubtful traditions of Athenian comedy and later ages. It is obviously a perilous adventure on which our poet has embarked, even without considering the fact that he is in the position of one who is translating and restoring a poetess who is unapproachable in lyrical vigour and the beauty of her style—almost an incredible venture when you think of all it means. But it is possible, too, that

the poet of the love lyrics of Grand Pré and the *Songs of the Sea children* with his light touch and manner of creating cosmic atmospheres and auras for erotic emotion out of starlight and leafage may come better off at times in his imitations than poets of more classical erudition who have experimented in the Sapphic lyric. I shall give the reader examples enough to judge for himself, with some notes from an old scholiast to help as he goes along.

Carman's scheme is comprehensive enough. He translates most of the better known fragments rounding them off with stanzas of his own invention. Sometimes he reconstructs from a line or two with the aid of suggestions from other fragments. But oftenest his lyric is an almost purely imaginative composition representing his idea of what Sappho's emotional life may have been or of some incident or scene which might be considered typical of her experience. The first of the lyrics is very properly an invocation to Aphrodite. It is an extension of a single line amongst the fragments which was probably also part of an invocation to the goddess. It is only a couple of stanzas simple in style and echoing in a mildly general way the love-lorn prayer of the great ode to Aphrodite.

Cyprus, Paphos or Panormus
May detain thee with their splendour
Of oblations on thine altars,
O imperial Aphrodite.

Yet do thou regard with pity
For a nameless child of passion,
This small unfrequented valley
By the sea, O sea-born mother.

The touches of local colour suit a certain poet's retreat amongst the hollows of the hills by the Hudson where these lyrics were composed. Of course he translates the famous ode itself, with essential if not literal fidelity. He wisely does not attempt a formal imitation of the stanza but uses throughout the Adonic verse, a short dactylic line which is used so effectively by Sappho as a closing cadence to the stanza which goes by her name. As an independent form its movement is too light and broken to carry the melodious flood of Sapphic song, but it avoids too evident rivalry with the original. Carman is careful to break the monotony of the short line and vary its cadence a little by the use of quantity and hovering accent, so that if you read the measure two lines together, it becomes an irregular form of Sapphic verse and at times comes nearer to the effect of the original than you might expect. In this way, and by his manner of interlacing the stanzas, he has evidently done his best to approach the linked cadences of Sapphic music especially the emphasis of the sixth stanza:

"What fair thing wouldst thou
Lure now to love thee?

"Who wrongs thee, Sappho?
If now she flies thee,
Soon shall she follow;—
Scorning thy gifts now,
Soon be the giver;—
And a loth loved one

"Soon be the lover."
So even now, too,

Come and release me
From mordant love pain,
And all my heart's will
Help me accomplish! [v]

The same measure is used Carman's translation of that other famous lyric which a great Greek critic of the second century quotes—unfortunately only in part—as illustrating Sappho's vigour in the selection of traits and her skill in grouping them.

Peer of the gods he seems,
Who in thy presence
Sits and hears close to him
Thy silver speech-tones
And lovely laughter.

Ah, but the heart flutters
Under my bosom,
When I behold thee
Even a moment,
Utterance leaves me;
. . . . . .
My tongue is useless;
A subtle fire
Runs through my body;
My eyes are sightless,
And my ears ringing;

I flush with fever,
And a strong trembling
Lays hold upon me;
Paler than grass am I,
Half dead for madness. [vi]

It is a close but not a captivating translation and renders nothing of the proud flow of Sappho and the vigour of her phrase. The two following stanzas are Carman's restoration of what has been lost in this lyric:

Yet must I, greatly
Daring, adore thee,
As the adventurous
Sailor makes seaward
For the lost skyline

And undiscovered
Fabulous islands,
Drawn by the lure of
Beauty and summer
And the sea's secret. [VI]

Carman recovers some of his ease and freedom of phrasing there when he is no longer translating. There is nothing certain in conjectural restoration but Carman's idea of "greatly daring" is, I think, a romanticizing transformation of Sappho. Her habitual manner of ending those plaints is fairly well indicated in the songs to Anactoria and Atthis and Gongyla. It is a more realistic tone of resignation, of enduring what the gods send, "one cannot have all one wishes, go your way but remember me and the beautiful days we have had together." There is a safer line of reconstruction in lyric XXIII. It starts from a well-known single line of Sappho's, and develops its sentiment in a style of tender reminiscence quite characteristic of her lyrical epistles to her girl friends. It is in iambic blank verse, a little langourous, but with Carman's ease and fullness of phrase.

I loved thee, Atthis, in the long ago,
When the great oleanders were in flower
In the broad herded meadows full of sun.
And we would often at the fall of dusk
Wander together by the silver stream,
When the soft grass-heads were all wet with dew

And purple-misted in the fading light.
And joy I knew and sorrow at thy voice,
And the superb magnificence of love,—
The loneliness that saddens solitude,
And the sweet speech that makes it durable,—
. . . . . .
O Atthis, how I loved thee long ago
In that fair perished summer by the sea!

The idyllic imagery comes in well. Sappho liked to speak of brooks and flowers and the rustling leafage as blended with the memories of her friends. Some of the phrases are recognizably Sapphic in their sensuous poignancy, "The bitter longing and the keen desire". One of the difficulties of Carman's task is that he cannot often venture to define the situation. The relation or quality of the emotion which signifies so much, in Sappho, is left in the ambiguity of general traits. Here is number XXXVII, for example, which is a free invention, but whether it tells of the beginning of a flame for the queenly Anactoria, or the fickle Atthis, or the daintily gowned Gongyla, or a first meeting with Phaon, who is often a phantom figure in Carman's reconstruction, there is nothing to determine.

Well I found you in the twilight garden,
Laid a lover's hand upon your shoulder,
And we both were made aware of loving
Past the reach of reason to unravel,
Or the much desiring heart to follow.

There we heard the breath among the grasses
And the gurgle of soft running water,
Well contented with the spacious starlight,
The cool wind's touch and the deep blue distance,
Till the dawn came in with golden sandals.

There is a little piece (number XXXIV), also a free construction, which has the peculiar charm Carman's pathos often has in his simpler lyrics, a contemplative Vergilian melancholy over the fate of things with the finished simplicity of a Greek epigram:

"Who was Atthis?" men shall ask,
When the world is old, and time
Has accomplished without haste
The strange destiny of men.

Haply in that far-off age
One shall find these silver songs,
With their human freight, and guess
What a lover Sappho was.

These two stanzas would have made an excellent prologue for the whole collection. They are not altogether without authority. Dio Chryostom, a rhetorician of the first century, has saved a line of Sappho for us, "Somebody, I tell you, will keep the memory of us hereafter." It probably refers more to her fame as a poetess, or the fame of her school, than to her loves, but love and art are inextricably mixed in her immortal erotics. Anyway it is not quite an easy matter to guess what a lover Sappho was, and Carman leaves his reader with a good deal to guess. It is an old problem in literary history and still a subject of discussion amongst philologists. The comic dramatists writing a century or two after Sappho's time, left traditions which interpreted her erotic sentiment in the coarsest way and obscured any finer meaning which the cult of Eros might have in her "house of the Muses" in Mitylene. Not that the better tradition was quite lost. A scholar like Maximus of Tyre in the second

century could make what he felt to be a good guess at a lost chord in that earlier civilization of the Ægean which had become unintelligible to the Roman world of Ovid and Seneca. His comparison of Sappho's relation to Anactoria, Gyrinna and Atthis with the sentiment which Socrates professed for gifted youths in his circle like Phædrus and Charmides seems likely to be near the truth of the matter, especially if we make allowance for the difference between that feminine world of Sappho's with its fine nervous sensibilities and temperamental way of expressing itself, and the philosophic self-possession with which Socrates walked and talked through the day's adventures. For the world you get a glimpse of in the fragments is altogether a feminine one; there is rarely a reference to man in it except in the case of the epithalamies Sappho writes when one of her friends is going to be married. Flowers, garlands for lovely locks, perfumes, dainty robes, cushions and slippers and delicate girlish feasts are the things you hear most about in the material surroundings. But apart from that their recreations are closely identified with their culture studies, and these are of the kind universal in aristocratic Greece, a highly artistic and technical culture of music, song and dancing. Everything of which you hear in the fragments suggests the delicacy of feeling and refinement, maiden dances round the altar on the green, the Æolic art of lyrical composition, hymns to Hera, praying for "pure and beautiful things" to Sappho's girls, or to Aphrodite for a happy lot, or edifying poems moralizing on the ruin which the weakness of

Helen brought upon Troy, or describing with feminine appreciation the ceremonial splendour at the marriage of the god-like Hector and the virtuous Andromache. The Hellenic love of culture gives the tone to their life, the "roses that come from Pieria" are the most highly valued, the maiden's accomplishment in song is as much praised as her grace or beauty. To be without culture (ἀπάιδευτος), or to be a rustic young woman who does not know how to drape her robe about her ankles, or to be a girl who makes herself cheap are alike contemptible in the eyes of the highbred damsels who frequented Sappho's house of the Muses or came there to be finished off. The fragments leave us in no doubt as to Sappho's high standard in all these things; she jibes sharply at Andromeda, apparently the head of a rival circle or school of the Muses, for having made a country-bred girl her favourite. Of course the great events in such a circle were the partings, the sundering of tender friendships when some Eunice of Salamis or Hero of Gyara left for home or some Anactoria crossed the sea to be married and might possibly forget in the new life of wife or mother the sweet companionship of old days at the school of the Muses in Mitylene; or, worse still, when some Atthis deserts the circle of Sappho for that of Andromeda. Most of the erotic lyrics we find in the fragments evidently deal with such breaks in the life of the circle, perhaps all of them do. They express her feelings in language which at times seems strange and extravagant to us who have so little to help us in realizing exactly what the manners of that time were, and what

ceremonial modes or social conventions or artistic affectations might be current in that feminine society. Sappho herself had been married and had a daughter, but you would think from the warmth and intensity of her language that her affection for those dear girl friends [1] was a passion which had absorbed every other form of amatory sentiment in her life, though there is just enough in other fragments to show that it had not. Her girls are her beautiful ones toward whom her mind will never change. She might as well be dead, she says,—it is a favourite expression of hers—when some dear one has left her; she can imagine the dear voice calling her across the dividing seas; she would rather hear that loved footstep and see that bright face than all the chariots and shining battalions of Lydia. At times the emotion she describes herself as experiencing has all the marks of strong sensuous agitation. "It is love, that loosener of the limbs, that shakes me", she says in a lyric to Atthis, "love, that bitter-sweet irresistible thing". The very sight of Gongyla's robe makes her heart throb. In the famous lyric which the author of the treatise, *On the Sublime*, has preserved for us in part, the assemblage of emotions is complete for every sense, almost suspiciously so, I think; when she looks on the loved one her speech fails her, her eyes grow dim, a delicate fire runs through her veins, she trembles, she is paler than grass, she seems to herself about to die. And it is not only her own feelings she records, occasionally she represents those of her young friends as similar in intensity. "What an awful blow this

[1] ἑτάιραις ταις ἐμαισε Bergk Fr. 11.

is" [1] are the words she puts in the mouth of a girl who is leaving her house.

We can never know all the social conditions, the intellectual or spiritual needs, the artistic ferment of the time, as it affected women, the influence of fashion or of aristocratic Dorian ideals, amongst the islanders, which combined to make such circles as that of Sappho a natural product of the age but with an atmosphere and ethos of their own as distinctive as that of a Hôtel de Rambouillet. In any case the feminine culture of an age which had its Sappho, its Megalostrata, its Corinna, its Erinna, besides its Damophylas and Andromedas of merely local fame, is rather an unusual phenomenon. But though the life of women was evidently freer and richer than it was in other times and places, their lot in general could not have been a very assured one in that troubled world of the Ægean islands with its frequent revolutions and the advancing shadow of the Lydian empire always on the horizon. The outlook and expectation of a well-bred woman is probably fairly reflected by Sophocles a century and a half later in a surviving fragment of his *Tereus:* "Whether it is to the house of a friendly man, or that of a foreigner, or to sinister dwellings we have to go, we must bear with resignation what the gods send". And it was not only the hard realities of life and its bitter chances that had to be faced, but everywhere its grosser aspects showed themselves with as unrestrained candour in the popular cults and customs of the Greek which did not leave much room for romantic dis-

[1] ὡς δεῖνα πεπόνθαμεν Bergk Fr. 46.

guise or affectation. Sappho's poetic idealization of life had to accept all that, to include it and make the best of it in some way for her feminine world. You can still glean enough amongst those fragments of her poetic creation to see how she tried to do it, what help she might draw from the better elements in the official religion, from the idea of the justice of Zeus as the world's "holdfast", or of the matronly wardship of Hera, and the support which she found for the feminine soul in the culture—so native to a Greek anyway—of the arts and graces. The Greek words for the "Muses" and the "Graces" had a wealth of meaning on her lips which our terms have lost. But except for the support of the official religion and Homeric tradition, her idealism had to be of the kind which had its roots in the facts and manners of that Greek life, a firm footing in a world which would test romantic hyperæsthesia severely. Its Greek realism has no transcendental reverie in it; it is too early yet to be affected by Ionian cosmic speculation, or by the Orphic mysticism which gives a lift at times to Pindar's vision. What it reflects with a vigour and charm all its own is the natural bloom of life as it appeals to the feminine heart, its brightness, its beauty, its sweetness; that is, as they exist for youth, for when age approaches all is over for Sappho.[1] She speaks directly to the senses, with stabbing directness at times in the epithalamies, yet always with a grace and charm well suited to propitiate maiden delicacy. She has her own way of warning her girls that beauty is only skin deep and that "he who is

[1] Fr. 113.99.42 Edmonds (*Loeb Library*).

good, will soon be fair also". There could not be a more gracefully turned compliment than the lines in which she consoles some high-bred damsel whose maidenly reserve or pride had kept suitors at a distance: "Like the apple blooming high up on the topmost branch where the pickers overlooked it,—no, not overlooked it, but they could not reach so high". Another who had apparently been broken and crushed in one of the social or political storms of the time she compares to "a hyacinth which rude shepherds have trodden underfoot on the mountain". Carman has been doubtfully inspired to put these two fragments, with their essentially different pathos, together, and change the contemplative sympathy of Sappho into the egoistical interest of a lover coming to the rescue:

Art thou the topmost apple
The gatherers could not reach,
Reddening on the bow?
Shall I not take thee?

Art thou a hyacinth blossom
The shepherds upon the hills
Have trodden into the ground?
Shall I not lift thee? ([LIII]

Carman has little gift for pure translation. His irregular short measure does not render at all the lingering musical pathos of the original hexameters, and in that first stanza he has brushed the diamond dust off Sappho's wings rather rudely by omitting that fine return, "no, not overlooked", of the original, a return which was a favourite device of Sappho's as an old Greek critic tells

us. Carman does not seem to base his restorations or reconstructions on any very definite or historic idea of Sappho's situation. The world his lyrics represent is left vague in its relationships and possibilities. One is not always sure whether the song is supposed to be that of Sappho herself, one of those she sang for "my dear companions", or that of some phantom lover singing to the stars from nowhere in particular. The matter is of some importance in a restoration of Sappho, for it is not as a rule the ordinary sentiment of love between the sexes that has to be reproduced for us—there is very little of that in the fragments—but a peculiar world of feminine interests and preoccupations, and in particular a form of erotic sentiment which is a unique mixture of feminine delicacy and nervosity, that exaggerated form of *philia*, or subtle feminine cult of Eros, which gave its tone both to life and art in Sappho's circle. That sentiment was evidently part of a culture world which women had successfully established to minister to their own needs, perhaps a kind of shelter for delicate feminine ideals which could find little more than benevolent tolerance in a coarser world of men, the world in which Alcman sang of his "sweet culprits" (*αἰτίαι*) in the chorus. The situation is pretty clearly indicated in those verses which the poet Alcæus addressed to Sappho and in the manner in which she replies to them. "Pure Sappho"—the poet writes,—"of the violet tresses and the gentle smile, I would like to say something to you, but shame restrains me": to which Sappho replies, "If it were good and nice things you were desiring and not something ill you have

on your tongue to say, shame would not hinder you from speaking out". That is contemporary testimony [1] to the character of Sappho and can easily outweigh a world of later slanders. A feminine cult of Eros might arise in such a society as a masculine form of it arose in connection with the camp-life of Sparta, and could have as much of an elevating influence as Phædrus in Plato's Symposium ascribes to the latter, though it would have no public recognition as not possessing the same importance for the ancient State. In any case it was something which belonged to the earlier bloom of Greek civilization while its half-religious, half-poetic way of personifying elemental forms of experience and emotion into a cult had still some freshness and purity. Such a form of sentiment was sure to decay with changes in society or become perverted in the form, for which Lesbos itself became notorious; but originally it may have been as different as the idealistic *amore* of Dante and his sonnet-writing friends was from the cicisbeism of later Italy. But however you define the sentiment which inspires Sappho's erotics, and it was at least one which Solon and Plato could understand sympathetically, there is no doubt that in that house of the Muses in Mitylene it had some very feminine characteristics. There is not only the great tenderness in reminiscence, a pathetic clinging to what was beautiful in the past, there is something of an overstrained sensibility, of nervous irritability; quick spurts of feminine malice and jealousy are still traceable in the fragments. "Is there anyone in

[1] That is, if Aristotle can be trusted to know what he is speaking about.

the world you love better than me"? a feminine cry preserved for us in a single line by an old grammarian for the sake of the Æolic form of its pronoun. And one may fairly suspect that the language in which this overwrought sensibility expresses itself tends to harden a little in the artistic moulds of its own creation, to become in short a fine kind of convention, a duly expected form of ceremonial in style. The specific sensibility which is the basis of all artistic schools or cults always develops a form of stylistic ritual, and in a marked degree when the sentiment is erotic, as we see in the case of the Troubadours, of Chaucer in his imitations of the Trouvères, of Dante in his mystic sonnets, of Shakespeare himself perhaps. I rather suspect certain recurring phrases in Sappho's erotics about "wishing to die", and the awfulness of parting, and "returning to the soft arms" of a girl friend, and the "sight that fails" on beholding her, and all those derivatives from *Mania* which Sappho uses so freely, to be partly the technique of the school.[1] That wonderful assemblage in the well known lyric of all the traits which express extreme passion at the point of syncope, is so scientifically complete and so artistically arranged that it is certainly a case of "emotion remembered in tranquillity"—in great tranquillity. I do not mean, of course, that the sentiment in such poetry is merely conventional or affected any more than I think the mystic speech and vision of Dante in the *Vita Nuova* is merely conventional or affected. I mean that it is something like the hieratic costume of a cult,

[1] ὡς δεῖνα πεπόνθαμεν; μαινόλᾳ θνμω; τεθνάκην θελω etc.

of a cult which is sincere even in its extravagances of style. Only that the cult of the Æolic poetess had no mystic visions amongst its resources (expecting always such official ones as Aphrodite descending from Olympus in the golden chariot of Zeus) and had therefore to idealize the sensuous emotions perhaps excessively.

One can see then what a task it is to restore Sappho or revive her lyric. The reconstructive imagination and the psychology of a Browning and the selective touch of a Heredia combined would not be more than enough to do it passably, and you would have to throw in Tennyson's lyrical art to the bargain. Not more than enough at least to restore the Sappho whose character imposed silence on the revelling tongue of Alcæus, and whom Plato praised as the tenth Muse, not so much I imagine for her technical skill—Alcæus was at least her equal in that—as for her wonderful evocation of a feminine world new to the nine Muses. But no doubt the work of reconstruction would be easier, or at least the field for invention and passionate description would be enlarged if you chose to read Sappho as Ovid and Pierre Louys do, for then you would have all the freedom that the author of *Les Chansons de Bilitis* gets from dealing with a definite form of excess or perversion—*Ce lit encore tiède où je laisse errer ma bouche;* Carman, who is naturally delicate as well as discreet, takes a rather vague line between the possibilities, so much so that his Sappho is almost a phantom for us. His reconstruction avoids a definite psychology of the poetess, and falls back upon a vaguely general expression of amatory feel-

ing and on situations which hang in the air both emotionally and scenically. Here, for example, are two lyrics which come to us, as so many others do, like voices out of the darkness. Under which Aphrodite, Ourania or Pandemos, the *philia* of the house in Mitylene or the later Lesbian, is their sentiment to be ranked?

It was summer when I found you
In the meadow long ago,
And the golden vetch was growing
By the shore,

Did we falter when love took us
With a gust of great desire?
Does the barley bid the wind wait
In his course? [XXV]

The second at least decides the sex:

Once in the shining street,
In the heart of a seaboard town,
As I waited, behold, there came
The woman I loved.

As when in the early spring,
A daffodil blooms in the grass,
Golden and gracious and glad,
The solitude smiled. [LXXVIII]

One thing however might seem certain, tradition, early and late, has so fixed it in Sappho's story, that life had no other meaning for her than love. Carman very naturally makes use of it; there was a time in her life as there is in that of many, when it must have been true for her, and there is a sense also in which life is finished for some when it ceases to be true.

Ah, but now henceforth
Only one meaning
Has life for me.

Only one purport,
Measure and beauty,
Has the bright world.
. . . . . .
Thee, only thee! [LXIV]

And in the same sense Carman makes Sappho write her own epitaph (LX):

When I have departed,
Say but this behind me,
"Love was all her wisdom,
All her care.

"Well she kept love's secret,—
Dared and never faltered,—
Laughed and never doubted
Love would win.

"Let the world's rough triumph
Trample by above her,
She is safe forever
From all harm.

"In a land that knows not
Bitterness nor sorrow
She has found out all
Of truth at last."

These lines would make a good epitaph for the Sappho of common tradition, the shipwrecked heroine of the Leucadian cliff. But even if they have justification enough in the poetic vehemence of lyrics that tell us that "love shakes her heart like the rushing wind descending on the oaks", we have still to remember that she was a

very industrious artist, the author of many volumes requiring much labour of invention and great nicety of workmanship. The idea of a "burning Sappho" all for love and the world well lost cannot be the whole truth about her any more than it is about George Sand. "Wise", "noble", "refined", are the epithets judges like Plato and Aristotle, who had read all her works, use in speaking of her. She is the sage counsellor of her young friends on the subject of love and marriage, as you may see in the lyrical epistle to Anactoria and other fragments. When she is not writing the erotics of the cult, she speaks of herself as of a gentle and simple disposition. "Pure" and "beautiful" are her favourite terms for the things she values and though the Greek words have not all the meaning on her lips that the English ones would have with Elizabeth Barrett Browning they mean at least as much as George Sand meant by them. And like that great lyrist—in prose, Sappho also seems to feel that though the pulse of life for her is love, yet its mainstay is in her work, her art. What she boasts as the good fortune and happiness of her life is, not the gifts of Aphrodite, but the gifts of the Muses which will make her remembered.[1] Sappho can speak of herself as "the servant of Aphrodite", it is the language of the cult, just as Dante can speak of himself as the servitor of love,[2] but that is a different thing from being the slave of passion for whom life had only one meaning. The interpreter of Sappho has to bring these two aspects of

[1] See Fragments 10 and 11, Edmonds (*Loeb Library*).

[2] *Purgatorio* Canto XXIV (*io mi son un che quando Amore spira, etcetera*), and *Vita Nuova,* passim.

her life together and make a harmony out of them. Of course Sappho was "very much of a woman", as one of the old commentators remarks, and no doubt there had been times when the ordinary passion of sex had been the supreme interest in life. But it does not seem as if she had ever made such crises in her own life the theme of her songs. Our modern Aristarchus, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff may perhaps be too positive on this point, but there is little or nothing in the fragments which can with any certainty be understood in that way. If her poetry had contained very much of that kind of sentiment some grammarian would certainly have reported her transports for the sake of an Æolic inflexion or some exceptional use of metre. All the same there may be no great objection to the restorer of Sappho inserting a few lyrics suggestive of this side of her life. Carman makes considerable use of the legendary Phaon in this way; he is naturally glad to get hold of a definite human figure, even if it is rather mythical, for this Sapphic world of his which is tenanted only by vague voices. I rather wonder he did not have a try with Alcæus, who at least is a little bit of reality in Sappho's life and song. The Phaon songs are, of course, Sappho's lamentations over his absence.

Ah, what detains thee, Phaon,
So long from Mitylene,
Where now thy restless lover
Wearies for thy coming?

A fever burns me, Phaon;
My knees quake on the threshold,
And all my strength is loosened,
Slack with disappointment.

But thou wilt come, my Phaon,
Back from the sea like morning,
To quench in golden gladness
The ache of parted lovers.

That is the whole of lyric XL and here are the closing stanzas of XLI which is a plaint in the same key:

. . . . . .

And the moving grasses
Have relief; the dew-drench

Comes to quell the parching
Ache of noon they suffered.

I alone of all things
Fret with unsluiced fire.

And there is no quenching
In the night for Sappho,

Since her lover Phaon
Leaves her unrequited.

Sometimes it is an unnamed lover that comes serenading to her door in the twilight, as in lyric XXI, a graceful composition with melodious dactylic movement and the Adonic closing cadence.

Softly the first step of twilight
Falls on the darkening dial,
One by one kindle the lights
In Mitylene.

Noises are hushed in the courtyard,
The busy day is departing,
Children are called from their games,—
Herds from their grazing.

. . . . . .

From the hushed street, through the portal,
Where soon my lover will enter,
Comes the pure strain of a flute
Tender with passion.

That may be Phaon again, or you can fancy it is some *komazonting* Alcæus of days unknown to us, who may possibly have had a better reception than any of the applicants of whom we have a hint in the fragments.

Some of the lyrics are pleasing inventions from a general point of view which is safe enough. Sappho hated the thought of old age, if we can trust the philological restoration of eminent scholars.[1] In any case one can very well fancy Sappho in later years looking out over the sea from her garden in Mitylene with some such thoughts in her heart as Carman shapes into melodious verse for her in lyric LIV:

> How soon will all my lovely days be over,
> And I no more be found beneath the sun,—
> Neither beside the many murmuring sea,
> Nor where the plain-winds whisper to the reeds,
> Nor in the tall beech-woods among the hills
> . . . . . .
> For I am eager, and the flame of life
> Burns quickly in the fragile lamp of clay.
> Passion and love and longing and hot tears
> Consume this mortal Sappho, and too soon
> A great wind from the dark will blow upon me,
> And I be no more found in the fair world,
> For all the search of the revolving moon
> And patient shine of everlasting stars.

Sappho's poetry was rich in epithalamies with much Homeric and mythological matter in them, furnishing sage moral lessons for her girls. There are some good fragments left. Carman wisely avoids that difficult ground, but he has given us imaginative reconstructions of her Linus and Adonis songs. The Lityerses song (C),

[1] Fr. 113, Edmonds (*Loeb Library*).

in his favourite dactylic imitation of the Sapphic stanza, with a line more than usual, is a fine bit of work. Carman is much at home in its idyllic images of the spring time. It is not very like the Lityerses song Theocritus gives us in one of his eclogues, in which the reapers grumble at the thin soup the house-steward serves them, but the old Lydian chants may have had a more ideal character.

Once more the rain on the mountain,
Once more the wind in the valley,
With the soft odours of springtime
And the long breath of remembrance,
O Lityerses!

. . . . . .

Gentlier now falls the twilight,
With the slim moon in the pear-trees;
And the green frogs in the meadows
Blow on shrill pipes to awaken
Thee, Lityerses.

Gladlier now crimson morning
Flushes fair-built Mitylene,—
Portico, temple, and column,—
Where the young garlanded women
Praise thee with singing.

Ah, but what burden of sorrow
Tinges their slow stately chorus,
Though spring revisits the glad earth?
Wilt thou not wake to their summons,
O Lityerses?

Shall they never behold thee,—
Nevermore see thee returning
Down the blue cleft of the mountains,
Nor in the purple of evening
Welcome thy coming?

. . . . . .

In a number of these lyrics Carman has introduced his favourite deity Pan. He has found it no doubt difficult to make a really natural use of the Olympic mythology or even of the Aphrodite cult in the Sapphic fragments —his lyric on the Cyprian (XII) is a frosty piece of work—while in Pan as we have seen he can still find a kind of philosophic reality, suitable enough to use in a lyric like XCVI, which is just one of his spring songs with the "golden voiced" frogs in the marshes and the feathered songsters in the orchards. But whatever Pan may have meant to the philosophic Pindar, he could be little else to the aristocratic Sappho than the shaggy goat-footed deity of the Arcadians whom the elegant Lesbians despised, as you see in a fragment of Alcæus, as a rude people living on acorns and wild fruit. One can hardly fancy Sappho invoking Pan as a tutelary deity for her high-bred maidens, as Carman makes her do in lyric XLIV. But it is a fair example of the straits a restorer of Sappho finds himself in when he tries to reproduce for us the religious and social atmosphere of her life. As he makes little use of Sappho as the priestess of the Muses and the centre of that feminine world of culture of which we get glimpses in the fragments, he has to fill his stage as he best can with possible incidents and adventures of an erotic kind from the general traditions of Greek life. He finds room in this way for a good deal of pleasing invention in idyllic narrative and description. Lyric XCVII, for example, with its spring scene in the market square of Mitylene, when navigation begins again, is well conceived and has good touches of local colour:

Have the laden galleons been sighted
Stoutly labouring up the sea from Tyre?

There is also a vague suggestion of an adventure at the Eleusinian Mysteries which it would not have been easy to develop further, we know so little that is intimate about the manners at such gatherings, with all the hints that can be obtained from the orators of a later time. Even the adventurous Pierre Louys does not allow Bilitis to profane the mysteries—"*Mai je n'en dirai pas davantage*". Lyric LXXXV, on the other hand, is a bold fancy piece which gives an account of the arrival in Sappho's garden of a lovely "Dryad" from Pontus, found in a wood by sea-rovers and brought hither presumably as they used to bring *hierodouloi* to the temples at Paphos and Eryx. The Dryad is named Gorgo by Carman but can hardly be the girl in Sappho's songs who seems to have been a long descended daughter of kings and perhaps the head of a rival circle. In this free way of treating his subject Carman often seeks to make it interesting without heeding too much what would be possible in a song of Sappho's. Sappho's descriptions of nature in the few verses of that kind which have been preserved for us are jewels of literary workmanship. Carman reproduces them carefully and has good imitations also of her vivid metaphors in such cases. Of course his modern and very transcendental sense of nature often takes him beyond the range of Sappho's feeling or at least of any words she could find for it. The Greek mind could not think poetically of any invisible power in nature except under some specific figure of a deity.

When the sea roughens in Alcæus it is because of the mood of Poseidon. A modern poet cannot make much use of this old symbolism, and Carman to get his effect must give us a transcendental kind of sea-music which is our modern way of giving life to nature. He adds a little Hesiodic mythology by way of classical decoration:

Older than Saturn,
Older than Rhea,
That mournful music,
Falling and surging

With the vast rhythm
Ceaseless, eternal,
Keeps the long tally
Of all things mortal. [xcv]

That may be legitimate modernization, for one can imagine Sappho looking at the sea with some such thoughts in her heart, though they would not find that philosophically romantic expression. But perhaps Carman's mystical emotionalism leads him too far when he makes Sappho sing of the "unfathomed bewitchment" wrought by the wind in the grasses (XXXIII) and plunges into ecstacies of the modern workmanship like the following:

Never yet, love, in earth's lifetime,
Hath any cunningest minstrel
Told the one seventh of wisdom,
Ravishment, ecstasy, transport,
Hid in the hue of the hyacinth's
Purple in springtime.

Sappho has extravagances enough of her own, goodness knows, in connection with that cult of Eros and Anteros,

or Aphrodite Peitho, or whatever it was, without putting modern affectations upon her. Perhaps the poets are never without the imaginative extravagances of a cult or convention of some kind, but their art must be able to put our reason to sleep and carry us away with them to their spiritual mansions. The real test of all art is that its beauty and strength can quite overcome the sense of artifice in its invention or workmanship. Perhaps it was something of that kind Sappho meant when she spoke so subtly in her famous lyric of compelling her friend to love her— κωὐκ ἐθέλοισα. They loved each other for their song in that school of the Muses. Sappho writes to Atthis: "You were like a goddess to Anactoria and she loved your song the best".

Carman's reconstruction of Sappho is an interesting interlude in his work and is greatly conceived as his poetic enterprises mostly are. There are fine idyllic bits in it, the graceful, lightly touched vignettes so characteristic of his poetic sense of nature, even if it is not quite that of Sappho help him out here. He has tender elegiac notes too, which render truly enough, I think, a fundamental mood of Sappho. He is less impressive in his erotic sentiment which is rather a vague and languid substitute for the splendid vigour and passion in the Sapphic lyric, partly because his treatment of Sappho as a lover is ambiguous and hesitates between different traditions and what one may suspect to be his own comprehensively sympathetic view. His reconstruction certainly has involved labour enough, of the kind he is evidently willing to give, labour of invention, labour of

piecing together this fragment and that with some coherence, labour of expression and moulding the exotic type of verse he uses into fluent movement and melody, but it does not give evidence of great preparatory study of the material in the Sapphic fragments. Perhaps he is a little indolent or too easy on that side. Nor are his closer translations of Sappho very captivating; they lack energy and fullness of tone. As a poet he is naturally best in his free inventions where he can use freely his gift for description of nature and his general sense of the poetry and pathos of life without having to think too much of how a Greek poetess of the sixth century would have felt. Many of the lyrics are just Carman himself, musing at Grand Pré in springtime, or idealizing some amatory experience of his own in his own way, with a general reminiscence of the Sapphic stanza running in his head. The collection which was heralded by a smaller volume of some twelve lyrics probably originated in this way. All the same there are poems in it which render a mood of Sappho's very sympathetically and a few also which give us impressively human tones in that old Greek life by the sea. Here is one, lyric XXXIX, which recalls very troubled times in Mitylene when Sappho and the best of its citizens were driven into exile.

I grow weary of foreign cities,
The sea travel and the stranger peoples.
Even the clear voice of hardy fortune
Dares me not as once on brave adventure.

For the heart of man must seek and wander,
Ask and question and discover knowledge;

Yet above all goodly things is wisdom,
And love greater than all understanding.

So, a mariner, I long for land-fall,—
When a darker purple of the sea-rim,
O'er the prow uplifted, shall be Lesbos
And the gleaming towers of Mitylene.

That might well be, if not from Sappho, at least from that gallant fighter and sea-farer, Alcæus, returning home to Mitylene. Carman always gets a lift from the sea.

Carman has evidently considered carefully the kind of metre he should use in a reconstruction like this of the Æolic lyric. Pierre Louys in a similar case uses rhythmic prose, a form which throws nearly the whole weight of the invention on the specific treatment of situation and sentiment with little aid from poetic description or lyrical pathos. That would not suit Carman at all, who needs a full lyrical tone to reinforce his much more generalized sentiment which often differs very little from his ordinary love lyric or his idyllic description. Yet the Sappho lyrics as they were in some sense a restoration, obviously required to be associated as much as possible with the forms and character of classical prosody. Carman has wisely avoided that strict and formal imitation of the classical lyric which even in the hands of Tennyson and Swinburne gives us a sense of artifice and forced construction. Formal imitations like lyric LXV are rare. But in the unrhymed lyric which he uses in a variety of dactylic, trochaic, iambic and anapestic movements, there is a suggestion of classical

prosody, the formal use of quantity being partly preserved where it will coincide naturally with the English use of accent. It is apt to be an irregular compromise between the classical feeling for quantity and the dominance of accent in English verse. His most distinctive type of verse is a popular adaptation of the famous Sapphic stanza in a dactylic measure of three feet with the Adonic close. The Adonic is also the close of the old hexameter line and its effect is secretly familiar to us in that form. The whole is a facile movement and may easily fall into a monotony of stress and structure, but Carman uses it with ease and grace and it carries well and smoothly—all measures are smooth in Carman's hands—the kind of elegiac pathos that is the prevailing tone of his Sappho poems. Here are the opening stanzas of lyric XXI:

> Softly the first step of twilight
> Falls on the darkening dial,
> One by one kindle the lights
> In Mitylene.
>
> Noises are heard in the courtyard,
> The busy day is departing,
> Children are called from their games,—
> Herds from their grazing.

Yet when all is said, there is the greater ease of movement and the more natural spontaneous flowering of feeling and phrase in the pure English pentameters of lyric XXIII with their Tennysonian sweetness,—"I loved thee, Atthis, in the long ago".

Lyric C with an additional line in its stanza is a particularly vigorous type of his dactylics. Pure trochaics

are well handled in XCVII. LII is a good example of his anapestic measure; its tendency to rush and leap does not carry the same kind of pathos and Carman in general prefers dactylic and trochaic movements, perhaps as more suggestive of classical rhythm or for the soft unaccented ending of the line which is a help to the unrhymed lyric.

It was all a novel experiment for Carman whose rhythms had hitherto run in the established lyrical moulds except for some genial new modellings after Browning, but he comes very well out of it, most of his ventures being very readable. In the best of them he gives even those exotic measures that vitality of accent, which blends thought and feeling poetically and is the surest thing in his lyrical gift.

VIII

THE PROSE ESSAYS

THE Sappho volume was one more considerable enterprise finished and laid away, after being duly docketed with some perfunctory journalistic notices, in the pigeon holes of the republic of letters to be looked for by a future generation, or not; outside of some literary professionals, I have rarely met a Canadian who knew anything about it, and not often even amongst them. With the publication of that volume and the Pipes of Pan series Carman seemed to have given pretty well all his distinctive notes to the world. Yet it cannot be said that his poetry had left any clear and decided impression on the public of its scope and significance. Some general phrases, "Individuality of genius", magic of style", "melodious versification", that was the most you heard even from the critical reviews. For the general reader, it was the want of a rough robust reality such as you get in Vachell Lindsay's poetry or even in Robert Service's Kiplingesque verse, and in literary circles, where a new poetry with a more probing psychology of the conscience was coming into vogue, along with a new style which expressed all its doubt and hesitation, Carman's romantic transcendentalism no longer quite satisfied the cravings

of their spirit. Perhaps had there been a supreme song throwing a light on his vision of the universe strong enough to force the world to listen and consider, it would have been different. But the Pipes of Pan series falls short of that in more than one way. Carman's prose essays look as if they were partly intended to supplement and explain the idealistic vision of life in his poetry. They are mostly written in the lighter style of the aesthetic essay of the Victorian period, often a half-playful ingenious rather than a systematic treatment of the subject, with lively touches of paradox and extravaganza at times yet always with a serious groundwork of aesthetic and transcendental theory. For the essays do reinforce his poetry in this way—whether poetry should need that is another question—setting its ideals and principles in a clear light, defending its uncompromising optimism, its conservative literary and moral standards and explaining its mystical strains of thought, sometimes qualifying them or reducing them to bring them nearer the ordinary or normal conception of life. They certainly complete the idea of the poet's personality, for those who are willing to read through four fairly large collections of essays all published about this period, *The Kinship of Nature* in 1904, *The Friendship of Art* in the same year, *The Poetry of Life* in 1905, and *The Making of Personality* in 1908. The last book stands rather apart from the others, representing a new stimulus in his life and a certain change or development of his aesthetics in the direction of practical culture, how to "make the most and best of oneself". It was written in collaboration with Mrs. Mary

Perry King, Carman states in the preface, and stands in close connection with her "new movement for education by means of the three rhythmic arts", music, poetry, and dancing. In his prose Carman is often the sober exponent of literary theories, and the philosophic critic. The essays do not develop, as they might have done, the mystical symbolism in his poetry, but rather reduce its significance by showing it as an ordinary hidden instinct in the common impulses and reactions of men. His poetic style serves him well here, for he does not altogether lay aside his singing robes, especially in his more aesthetic essays. When he is giving us his impressions of the anthem of the hermit thrush among the firs, or the elm trees by the river bank, or the influence of beauty in life, or the awakening of nature in spring, he is still the poet using prose with a lyrical flow and ecstatic phrase which seeks to rival the effect of verse.

> Go into the park or the woods any morning now, and listen until you hear a single rainbird soloing plaintively above the dimmer sounds. At that one touch of wildwood magic, how uncontemporaneous and primitive we become! How little matter our worldly state, our clothes and carriages, our bills and bank accounts! That is a strain which pierces the heart and plays upon the soul. It finds us as we are, not as we seem. And unless we are wholly corrupted and sodden with civilization, it wakens glimmerings of the golden age within us. . . . As that pealing cadence thrills on the damp air, the world is renewed for us; we pass backward a thousand years to the morning of earth, before cares and sorrows are forgotten, before ever we bethought ourselves of retrospect and inquiry.[1]

Quite a number of his essays in the first two volumes are just prose versions of his spring song, and he repeats in

[1] *The Kinship of Nature*, p. 129.

prose as callously as he does in verse. They show little of that precision of observation or analysis which you find in Burroughs or Ruskin; you may have some doubts as to what he says about the local conditions the elm loves or his view that the leafage of the pine makes the finest tracery of any tree against the sky—he is probably remembering Vergil's *abies in montibus altis*—his truth is rather that of ecstatic impression and reverie. Hear him on the coming of spring in "April in Town" and you get the idea of a soul almost as purely attuned to the life of nature and the woodlands as that of a Faun who has been caged by some unhappy chance in the haunts of civilization:

> The ancient immemorial joy of a thousand departed Aprils stirs from its lurking sleep in those placid veins of yours, and would lure you away beyond the limits of town. It is the old spring fret that moved myriads of your fellows long before, and will move others when we are gone. But for the ample moment, the large sufficient now, our glad elasticity of spirit, our rapturous exhiliration of life, are as keen as if they were to be eternal. Indeed they are the eternal part of us, of which we partake in these rare moments of existence.
>
> Then as the dim desire for change, the wild wander-lust, shapes the spring madness in our brain, the longing grows definite. . . .
>
> . . . How fruitless and wrong and uneffectual our tawdry city lives appear! Of what use is it to toil with so much diligence, to dress with such elaborate care? Surely we have been spending months in vain, when one soft spring morning can give our whole scheme of living the lie.[1]

There is some forcing of the note there, the hyperbole of his poetry passing into prose where it challenges criticism more. He will be just as brilliantly ecstatic on June

[1] *The Kinship of Nature,* p. 122.

or on the "brave scarlet and golden coat of autumn" when its turn comes. The phrasing is poetically eloquent, effulgent, often exquisite; we admire the luxurious workmanship but we do not lose ourselves in it as we do when Burroughs is describing for us the shy approach of April, or when Peter McArthur is telling us of the doings in his farmyard, of the air Waldemar the crow gives himself of the sagacity of Caesar the farm-dog. And we do not lose ourselves in it because Carman does not lose himself in it, but is so busy with his flowers of expression that he hardly lets the facts speak. He has a witty turn of fancy which he likes to indulge with playful paradox and extravaganza as in "The Madness of the March Hare", where the strains float between high burlesque and a half-serious treatment of his cosmic idea in "The Madness of Ishtar". The urge of nature in the little animal is keyed up to the pitch of some high Aphrodite cult, even to the Apolline inspiration of the Delphic priestess and the "divine insanity" of a Blake or a Shelley, the common principle in all being that "the soul is not happy in exactitude, but loves the overbrimming measure", a dictum which may explain a little madness in Carman at any rate. Here is part of his rhapsody on the March Hare.

. . . his madness is a madness of ecstasy, of elation, of transport. He is a visionary and partakes of the rapture of lovers and prophets and bards. He is possessed and carried out of himself. He is akin to the oracular priestess of Delphi and the Vestals whose care it was to cherish the sacred flame of their goddess. He may be the least of all the creatures who suffer this

form of madness, but his tenure of the divine possession is none the less authentic.[1]

I doubt if this vein of ecstatic extravaganza did Carman much good with the public: though it was well written, in its way, with much grace of style.

There is a better expression of Carman's playfully philosophic humour in the essay "On Tradition", a loose but readable mixture of Emersonian sublimities and a more worldly logic; it begins with a pleasant vignette of Sunday morning and some modern Priscilla on her way to church, while the orioles are singing in the grove; and has a stern tirade against respectability, mere respectability.

In his more critical essays, when he is discussing theories and standards of art and literature, his tone is somewhat different, serious, even didactically moral and in general highly conservative and orthodox. In contested questions he generally balances himself prudently between extreme points of view. On one subject, however, the ethical character of poetry or art in general, he is as uncompromising as Ruskin, rather more so indeed, his "three-fold canon" of the truth, beauty and moral intent, or at least moral effect, required in art is as absolute as the Decalogue in expression and takes little heed of some queerly mixed phenomena in the Hall of Fame. In his essay on "Sanity and Art" he writes:

Upon no other class in a community, then, does the obligation of noble living rest with so unremitting a strain as on its artists, its writers, its painters, its architects and music-makers.

[1] *The Friendship of Art,* p. 295.

> It almost seems that to be an artist one must first attain a perfect personality. That is difficult. But then, art is a difficult matter; it is nothing less than the embodiment of perfection.[1]

It is a good doctrine, no doubt, especially for a time that was beginning to make ideals of extravagance and eccentricity, but it needs to be stated with more respect for historical fact, for wayward Heines and de Mussets, for ailing Leopardis, and Rousseaus, for embittered Swifts and unbalanced Strindbergs, for Villon and Catullus. The single-minded intensity of the artist does not always insure the harmonious development of the man as in a Sophocles or Goethe. *Dichter sündigen nicht viel*, says the wise Goethe, and wisely leaves it at that. The sins of the bards are light, comparatively. But if you want a corrective to the severity of Carman's standard here you can get it from himself in the essay on "The Madness of the March Hare" from which I have already quoted. Carman indeed is not at all solicitous about the consistency of his views and dicta in these essays. The reader who tries to collect them into a general view will find a great many dissonant and even contradictory propositions sometimes arising from a conflict between his idealistic and practical point of view, not fully reconciled, sometimes from the fundamental difference between his aesthetic and ethical judgment, and sometimes from a latitude of view that gives exclusive emphasis to the mood that is uppermost at the time. When he is reflecting, for example, on the difficulty which a new style in literature or a new form in art may have in finding appreciation he

[1] *The Friendship of Art*, p. 137.

is eloquent in pleading for patience and continued effort on the part of the public. He speaks as one who has himself suffered from this impatience:

> Anything exceptional and unusual demands an effort of the imagination before it can be appreciated; and this effort the average mind is unwilling to make. . . . But the best art and literature are always exceptional. There is always a quality of adventure in them. They represent the courageous daring of the artist in creating new forms, in propounding new truths, in establishing newer and nobler standards of conduct and enjoyment. They reflect the progress of humanity. (*The Friendship of Art*, p. 137.)

But three years later, when he is writing *The Making of Personality* along with Mrs King, and his mind is preoccupied with theories of the cultivation of individuality, it is quite a different doctrine that he preaches. A cultivated instinct is to be accepted as "the censor of all our wisdom". Reason alone is far too erratic and visionary. An instinctive aversion or sympathy may be trusted to reject or select in the way most suitable for our development in the choice of friends or of books. "Let us read nothing" he writes, "that we instinctively dislike; it can do no more good than food for which we have a natural distaste". In this way we are to be saved from "much wasteful experiment", from "much wondering and worrying". And it is Ibsen that serves him here as a sort of frightful example:

> Ibsen, for example, though an admirable dramatist, . . . may very possibly for you be unpleasantly superfluous; you may already have on your hands . . . more grievous problems than you can relish; then instinct most wisely bids you away from the theatre where his studies are being presented. Be not deluded by

any false sense of intellectual or fashionable obligation into watching his horrors. (*The Making of Personality*, p. 55.)

It would be a curious kind of modern culture that left the greatest dramatist of our time unread. Sometimes it is a mere change of mood. In one book he speaks of Carlyle as a great spiritual teacher; "How a draught from Carlyle will sluice the dust out of one's brain". In another written only four years later, Carlyle is an unharmonious being, a frightful example of these gloomy-faced people whom the state should punish as it punishes a murderer.

There is of course a truth in those double views but Carman does not take much trouble to find the underlying harmony, but is often content with a soothing compromise. One feels this particularly when he comes up against some of those troublesome antinomies that underlie questions of art and literature, idealism versus realism, optimism and pessimism, sincerity and suppression in poetry and the like. It is generally the higher or idealistic point of view that he emphasizes, for his views are really the theory of his own poetic art. He is strong on the necessity of sincerity in art. Carlyle himself, with whom it was the prime category, could not be more emphatic. "Art", he writes, "being the embodiment of the artist's ideal, is truly the corporeal substance of his spiritual self; and that there should be any falsehood in it, any deliberate failure to represent him faithfully is as monstrous as it would be for a man to disavow his own flesh and bones". . . . Insincerity is an offence of the "first magnitude" . . . in art insincerity is death. . . . "The insin-

cere artist is as much beyond the pale of human sympathy as the murderer. Morally he is a felon".[1]

Perhaps that is too unmerciful language. Sincerity is a somewhat ambiguous term in art. The weaker, less gifted kind of artist may be found often enough taking refuge in a touch that is not his own, in a sentiment that is there because it sounds well, or even a pose that is conscious of some exaggeration. That apostle of Art for Art's sake, Oscar Wilde, asserted his right to as many poses as the artist in him chose to assume and would hear of no distinctions. But most of us will certainly feel with Carman rather than with Wilde in this matter. Only, when Carman comes, in a different essay, to preach his uncompromising doctrine of the optimism poetry should express he is constrained to shade his ideal of sincerity considerably. No doubt he felt comfortably at one with what was then the current American sentiment in favour of an unblemished optimism in art. Poetry should be full of the gladness of life, joyously optimistic; he says, and his phrase is not a bad one, that it should be a "poetry of elation" to strengthen our hearts in courage and faith. He will not hear of doubts or depressing tones. That art is immoral he writes, which leaves us in any doubt whether life is gladness or sorrow. The poet shall "see to it that no drop of the poison of ennui finds its way into his work. . . . However utterly he may lose at times the wholesome appetite for life, he will utter no word of personal plaint, but carefully guard his poetry from the note of dejection".[2] In his essay on "The Seed of Success" he can

[1] *The Poetry of Life*, p. 3.

[2] *The Poetry of Life*, p. 103.

even say: "To maintain a smiling countenance is a sacred obligation to my fellows. Yes, even if it be insincere". It is of course the maxim of the American business man. You often saw it stuck up on the counter of an American office: *Keep smiling*. Carman meant something better when he began the essay, something nearer the teaching of Epictetus about the soul's independence of external events. But he ends by translating it into—"Wear a moral dickey, the effect on others—and even on yourself, is excellent". He is almost telling us that we are not to trust his own optimistic strains as the full truth of his attitude towards life. And just think of the poetry we should lose under his severe canon. So much of our modern poetry is an expression of the questioning spirit seeking new foundations for a faith in life, *l'angoisse moderne* which cannot satisfy itself with the old answers.

His canon certainly becomes an embarrassing one when he applies it to the great poets. *Lear* with its sombre Senecan elements he pronounces to be a poetry of elation. Well, there is a sense in which it is, like all great tragedy, yet its pathos like that of the *Oedipus Colonus* or of *Wallenstein* is not easily described as an elate optimism. Then he finds he has to set aside poets like Dante, Milton, Shelley, and Wordsworth along with Isaiah and Emerson as a class by themselves, poet-prophets "never to be satisfied with things as they are" . . . "unable to look with equanimity upon the sorry spectacle of human weakness, driven forward to their endless unhappiness by an insuperable curiosity for the truth about life".

And to balance matters on the other side he has to draw Homer and Vergil over into the class of "glad-hearted singers" along with Chaucer and Shakespeare and "the jovial Horace", types of the poet who is "no longer under the stress of an almost Orphic inspiration" but "human, comfortable, merry and content, a lover of wine and music and laughter". In all that Carman's theory is dragging him into doubtful characterization and faulty touches. In the Iliad Ate rules with frightful power very slightly relieved by some conception of the justice of Zeus and the favour of the gods. In Vergil the grave undertone of his epic loads the verse with melancholy cadence and is constantly coming to the surface in his best remembered lines—*Sunt lachrymae rerum*. Tennyson was well aware of it:

Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of humankind

Indeed the great Latin poets, as Tyrell remarks, are all profoundly sad. Even Horace has more grave tones than gay ones; it is a wise gravity of reflection in him that his admirers from Dante to F. Pattee have always praised. These essays were probably often hasty compositions, journalistic work to keep the pot boiling. They are generally much embarrassed between the opposing claims of the aesthetic and the ethical principle, and by the difference between the idealistic standard natural to a transcendentalist and the duty or desire of the optimist of that time to find things all right as they are; otherwise where would our progress be? Carman makes, for example, a very judicial balance of the abstract rights of idealism

and realism in art, but does not illumine the new face the realism of our time has begun to wear in its effort to unify the two. His reconciliation of the opposition is only the abstract conclusion that both are necessary. So on the question whether our time is favourable to poetic production or not, his position in one essay is that "we are steadily losing the moral ideals of our fathers and grandfathers . . . steadily suffering a spiritual deterioration . . . civilization has become a humiliating and unscrupulous game . . . we have gained the whole world but in doing it we have lost our own soul".[1] And that is why we have "no poets whose ability and influence are of national concern". But in other essays, both earlier and a little later, his point of view is different. Far from finding spiritual deterioration in our life, he hints that our fathers and grandfathers were rather a dull lot, and declares that "there never was a time bigger with spiritual promise than the present, nor more strenuously eager to liberate the human spirit for its next step forward in the arduous and inspiring journey towards perfection and happiness. . . . The resistance is less than in duller days". Carman felt strongly, as a poet of his kind would, the loss of certain chords in our time, and some want of spiritual harmony in its life rhythm, and he felt also that there was something alert and vigorous in modern literary enterprise. But he does not bring the two together and seek an explanation in the new conditions of society such as the growth of a powerful journalism bringing with it

[1] *The Poetry of Life*, pp. 93, 94.

new standards of popular appeal, and the tremendous destruction the modern sense of relativity has wrought amongst old canons of the Absolute. The modern interest in literature is less reverential perhaps than that of the older public that read Cowper, or Longfellow, or Wordsworth, or even Mrs Hemans, as regularly as their Bibles and with a similar plenary satisfaction of the soul; its standards of apprecation are more dubious and confused, but it is certainly more alert, more curiously inquisitive and interested in any new thing.

But if Carman's essays are not a great contribution to critical thought, his pages are bright with the same poetic fancy and transcendental vision that you find in his poems. Carman's prose style is always pleasing. It moves with alertness and grace; its refined simplicity and transcendental piquancy are of Emersonian quality but without the austerity of that sage, for Carman is often sentimentally effusive and indulges in light veins of extravaganza. There is an old-fashioned charm about his essays; they have the sweet breath of a more romantic and polished generation, elegancies of tone, sentimental loiterings and lingerings by the way, not often found now in the harder realism or the caricaturing humour or paradox of the modern genius. Where the theme suits his transcendental form of thought, it gets brilliant expression from him. Listen to him on Fact and Fancy, especially on Fancy and how it plays its part in the social construction of life:

> Between fancy and fact lies the dilemma of life. Our environment is largely what we make it . . . fact is solidified fancy.

. . . The massive fabrication of society is reared from stuff more volatile than the clouds . . . only half of it is solid. It is only fear, awe of these floating apparitions that keeps us inert. Fear is a malarial germ in the soul. If the world would only cast out fear and establish hope in its place, the morning of the millenium would be already far advanced.

That, certainly, should satisfy G. B. Shaw as a criticism of our social inertia, and still more our Soviet idealists. But afterwards comes the cold douche from the other side, which is Carman's way of cutting down his ideal truth to life-size:

. . . this life is in some sense a compromise . . . there is the fact of the physical to be taken count of, to be reverenced, to be loved, equally with the spiritual . . . after all the ideal may be faulty . . . we may be but setting out towards disaster . . . loyalty to fact is needed also . . . to those past ideas we have made permanent. It is good at times to let fancy be, to disregard the restless urgings of the inner life and dwell with the comfortable lower kingdoms, with the trees and the cattle. . . . To the overstrenuous idealist must be said; hold hard to fact. Live near the comforting, unrestless blessings of the actual . . . be constant to hasten slowly and hold the sadly imperfect we have already gained.

It is an eloquent sermon on an old text. What gives it individuality is the high accent of the Emersonian transcendentalist, the large reach of his phrase and his desire to reconcile the spiritual with the facts of nature and the wisdom of the ages. It is true, that New England culture is only one element in him amongst later influences, aesthetic and erotic deflections, divagations into Vagabondia, mystical elevations of nature that renounce reason more than the old transcendentalism was willing to do; but it is still the dominant influence in his

work and gives it its characteristic flavour. His stock came from its soil. One had only to look at him once, at the bony New England structure of the face tending to an ascetic sharpness of line and the long, rather loosely hung figure to realize how much truth there might be in those verses of a poem, "On Burial Hill", which he wrote in memory of some Puritan great-grandsire once a pastor in Concord:

> Perhaps we wear the very guise
> And features that he wore,
> And with the look of his own eyes
> Behold his world once more.
> Would that his spirit too might live,
> While lives his goodly name,
> To move among the sons of men,
> A minister of flame.

On the whole, he cannot but adhere to its creed, essentially, as far as his formal expression of himself in verse or prose is concerned; even at the cost perhaps of suppressing something of the natural man for the sake of the hierophant.

IX

LATER POEMS

Between 1905 and 1909 Carman was occupying himself mainly with prose essays, and definitive editions or selections from what he had already published. But in 1909 a new period of poetic productivity began with *The Rough Riders* published that year, *Echoes from Vagabondia* (1912), and *April Airs* (1916). There were also two volumes of poetry, chiefly a light species of masque, written in collaboration with Mary Perry King. A selection from these works along with some later compositions appeared, in 1921, under the title *Later Poems*.

Carman was over fifty when these volumes were published, and we might very well expect that there should be some change of style or thought in his poetry. The mystical element which has such a large place in his work might have been expected either to deepen with advancing years, and draw all things more and more unto itself, as it does in the genuine mystic, or it was likely to diminish and allow the normal aspects of things to take a more distinct place. It was the latter that happened in Carman's case. The mystical light was fading into that of common day and in most of the later poems his style is no longer so strongly oriented by it: the phrase is less

mystically abstract. Even in his nature poetry, a more normal form of sentiment takes the place of transcendental reverie oftener than it used to do, or at any rate brings it nearer to our ordinary sense of nature. Pieces like "The Cry of the Hillborn", "The Heart of Night", "The Deserted Pasture", "The Fireside Vision", "The Dance of the Sunbeams", and many others have all the simplicity of the early Victorian lyric even to its simple metrical mould and measured cadences. The cosmic idealism which used to give a mystical colour to his poem is often now hardly more than familiar poetic hyperbole or personification, as in "The Old Gray Wall", or in the following stanzas from "By Still Waters":

The odorous wild grape clambers
Over the tumbling wall,
And through the autumnal quiet
The chestnuts open and fall.
Sharing time's freshness and fragrance,
Part of the earth's great soul,
Here man's spirit may ripen
To wisdom serene and whole.

Shall we not grow with the asters—
Never reluctant nor sad,
Not counting the cost of being,
Living to dare and be glad?
Shall we not lift with the crickets
A chorus of ready cheer,
Braving the frost of oblivion,
Quick to be happy here?
. . . . . .
The deep red cones of the sumach
And the woodbine's crimson sprays
Have bannered the common roadside
For the pageant of passing days.

These are the oracles Nature
Fills with her holy breath,
Giving them glory of colour,
Transcending the shadow of death.

Here in the sifted sunlight
A spirit seems to brood
On the beauty and worth of being,
In tranquil, instinctive mood.
. . . . . .

For these quieter moods with their more subdued lyrical exaltation, Carman is naturally readier than he was to use blank verse as a vehicle, the quiet reflective type of blank verse he has in "A Mountain Gateway", smooth in movement and regular in accents, or the slightly more cadenced verse of "Pan in the Catskills". Both poems express the same spiritual experience with a slight variation in the surroundings.

They say that he is dead, and now no more
The reedy syrinx sounds among the hills,
When the long summer heat is on the land.
But I have heard the Catskill thrushes sing,
And therefore am incredulous of death,
Of pain and sorrow and mortality.

In these blue cañons deep with hemlock shade,
In solitudes of twilight or of dawn,
I have been rapt away from time and care
By the endearment of a golden strain
As pure as ever pierced the Thracian wild,
Filling the listener with a mute surmise.
. . . . . .
And then within my pagan heart awoke
Remembrance of far-off and fabled years
In the untarnished sunrise of the world,
When clear-eyed Hellas in her rapture heard
A slow mysterious piping wild and keen
Thrill through her vales, and whispered, "It is Pan!"

There is something of the old exaltation in its thought, the poet refuses to believe in death and pain, but the atmosphere is not so mystically loaded. Even Pan is no longer the world deity of the earlier volume but is shrinking back into something nearer his native form of the Arcadian god symbolizing a wild music of nature. But just because the poet's eye rests more on the face of life and the ordinary aspects of things, his compositions have generally a clearer outline and more unity in their tone and thought. They are often better wholes from the artistic point of view even if the sentiment and style are commoner. "Spring's Saraband" for example, goes over once more all the old phenomena, the marshy chorus, the song of the brooks and streams, the bluebird and the starling, the hepaticas and the maple buds, the daffodils and tulips and the new joy "old as time", but though the pageant is so familiar to the reader of Carman, it is gathered up and marshalled into order with an external vigour of allegorical vision which gives it a distinct individuality amongst his innumerable spring songs. There are some of Carman's finer touches in it ("There's not one rod of stony ground" etcetera), though its rhetorical pomp is not in his best lyrical manner.

Over the hills of April
With soft winds hand in hand,
Impassionate and dreamy-eyed
Spring leads her saraband.
Her garmants float and gather
And swirl along the plain,
Her headgear is the golden sun,
Her cloak the silver rain.

With colour and with music,
With perfumes and with pomp,
By meadowland and upland,
Through pasture, wood and swamp,
With promise and enchantment
Leading her mystic mime,
She comes to lure the world anew
With joy as old as time.

Quick lifts the marshy chorus
To transport, trill on trill;
There's not one rod of stony ground
Unanswering on the hill.

"The Path to Sankoty" is another example of the more careful art with which Carman now composes his landscape and in this case with a fine width and clearness of horizon:

The crooning sea spreads sailless
And gray to the world's rim,
Where hang the reeking fog-banks
Primordial and dim.

There fret the ceaseless currents,
And the eternal tide
Chafes over hidden shallows
Where the white horses ride.

The wistful fragrant moorlands
Whose smile bids panic cease,
Lie treeless and cloud-shadowed
In grave and lonely peace.

Across their flowering bosom
From the far end of day
Blow clean the great soft moor-winds
All sweet with rose and bay.

A world as large and simple
As first emerged for man,
Cleared for the human drama
Before the play began.

It is mostly a clean simple style with just enough of visionary phrase and epithet to lift it into the transcendental mood. In "The Flute of Spring" the vision is less transcendental but the movement recalls the sweetest melodies of the English lyric:

I know a shining meadow stream
That winds beneath an Eastern hill,
And all year long in sun or gloom
Its murmuring voice is never still.

The summer dies more gently there,
The April flowers are earlier,—
The first warm rain-wind from the Sound
Sets all their eager hearts astir.

And there when lengthening shadows fall
As softly as a wild bird's wing,
Across the valley in the dusk
I hear the silver flute of spring.

The cosmic call of spring is still a great resource for Carman's muse, but the treatment is less vividly fanciful. In "Earth's Voices" and "Resurgam" he seeks variety for it by calling in our old friend, the pantheistic absolute to help: "I am the breath of being", "I am the lift of wings" . . . "I call the buried seed" etcetera, or by philosophical musing. It is astonishing the amount of professional wear and tear the spring sentiment gets from our poet. Spring renewals for the magazines, I suppose; one must live. But the strain is wearing out. In "The Soul of April", and even in "Now the Lilac Tree's in Bud", hyperbolical rhetoric is taking the place of true lyrical exaltation:

Her hands are strong to comfort,
Her heart is quick to heed.
She knows the signs of sadness,
She knows the voice of need.

There is no living creature,
However poor or small,
But she will know its trouble
And hasten to its call.

Oh, well they fare forever,
By mighty dreams possessed,
Whose hearts have lain a moment
On that eternal breast.

As the mystical exaltation subsides in his later poetry he naturally seeks some new forms of expression for his lyrical ecstasy and optimistic vision of life. New reflective tones also emerge; with the wisdom of years he seeks to enter into more tranquil possession of himself and of what fate has given him with a corresponding resignation as to what it seems to have denied him. In some modest audits he makes now of his life and work, you can feel that his pulse is beating less feverishly. "Apologia" is an apology in the old Vagabondia tone for the Bohemian truancy of the poet's life . . . willing to loiter and let the world be. Its confessional exaggerations are meant to excite a sympathetic reaction to the contrary in the reader. "A Colophon" gives us another facet in his highly faceted conscience:

When all my writing has been done
Except the final colophon,

And I must bid beloved verse
Farewell for better or for worse.

Let me not linger o'er the page
In doubting or regretful age;

But as an unknown scribe in some
Monastic dim scriptorium,

When twilght on his labour fell
At the glad-heard refection bell

Might add poor Body's thanks to be
From spiritual toils set free,

Let me conclude with hearty zest,—
Laus Deo! Nunc bibendum est!

That is a finely felt *Nunc Dimittis* with a quiet sincerity of tone. The monastic scriptorium is excellent as a symbol of the poet's life and labour, every phrase perfect in its simplicity. It is characteristic of Carman that he has put this modest confessional next to "Apologia" in *Echoes from Vagabondia*, perhaps as a corrective of some rather flatulent sentiment in the latter. "The Enchanted Traveller" is really another "Apologia". Happiness is success; that is a theory he expounds at length in one of his prose essays. It is not broad enough to do justice to all the phenomena of life, but it represents fairly, I think, what he felt in his best days about his own life. His capacity for getting joy from natural things had not been numbed in him by any bitter struggle for what had not lain within his reach.

We travelled empty-handed
With hearts all fear above,
For we ate the bread of friendship,
We drank the wine of love.

Through many a wondrous autumn,
Through many a magic spring,
We hailed the scarlet banners,
We heard the blue-bird sing.

We looked on life and nature
With the eager eyes of youth,
And all we asked or cared for
Was beauty, joy, and truth.

This simple style of his has always at least natural flow and justness of accent, and often there will be a stanza which raises its poetic commonplace into higher vitality by the touch peculiar to Carman. It is the old ecstasy of the Vagabondia poet over the natural joy of existence, only he dispenses now with the high symbolisms. It is curious too, his love lyric has a new note of reality in it quite different from the old imaginative plaints over a lost Lenore or Gwendolen. Note the vigour with which "Nike" opens:

What do men give thanks for?
I give thanks for one,
Lovelier than the morning,
Dearer than the sun.

though I do not admire greatly the train of transcendental hyperboles that follows ("with a soul more subtle than the light of stars", etcetera), and Carman seems to be forgetting a thousand declarations in spring poem and aesthetic essay when he refuses to regard "the soul of June" as expressed in its roses, or the song of the thrush, or the azure moon, or anywhere else but in that "one haunting figure". Carman's nonchalance in such matters

is almost as great as Whitman's who regarded his inconsistencies as part of the bounty of nature in him.

The old cosmic idealism still animates his poetry at times but mostly in casual lines or reduced to the ordinary philosophic naturalism which would learn its lesson from nature, "Shall we not grow with the asters—never reluctant nor sad". In "The Chancellors" we have a chant of the spirit's soaring escape from the confusions of common life. Its fanciful framework of allegory, Mount Holyoke and Charlemagne and Toby and Tom, is not a very happy construction; but at least it is a fully rationalized doctrine of spiritual existence which both Tom and Toby deliver to us in strongly cut Browning-like phrases:

> In the farness divine
> Each hue, every line,
> Must inblend and suspire
> With the tone of desire,
> Till all flaws be recast
> To perfection at last.
> Whether lofty or low be
> Thy measure, what matters?
> When blinding noon scatters
> And soul grows aware
> Of a soul through the glare,
> Convinced there must so be
> A reach and a lift
> Through the dusk's purple rift,
> To the large, fair and new
> Where ideals come true.

Carman's poetry is throughout, as we have seen, in its higher vision, a poetic expression of that transcendental philosophy which in his time had said perhaps its last words in Royce and Bradley. The Pragmatist philosophy

of James with its tendency to loosen certitude was making its way in the schools and even affecting the general thought of the time, but it had no constructive technique and hardly existed for many whose thinking had been oriented like Carman's by the great idealistic structures of the past. Oriented, that is, in a general way, for Carman's optimistic faith expresses itself rather exclusively in aesthetic values. His "Te Deum", for example, is overcharged with an ecstatic eloquence which has not much in it that is new for us.

If I could paint you the autumn colour, the melting glow upon
all things laid,
. . . . . .
I should be lord of a world of rapture, master of magic and
gladness too,—
The touch of wonder transcending science, the solace escaping
from line and hue;
I would reveal through tint and texture the very soul of this
earth of ours,
Forever yearning through boundless beauty to exalt the spirit with
all her powers.
. . . . . .
Dare we dispel a single transport. . . .

I like "Triumphalis" better with its greater willingness to recognize the pain and travail that are also undeniable parts of human experience:

Soul art thou sad again
With the old sadness?
Thou shalt be glad again
With a new gladness,
When April sun and rain
Mount to the teeming brain
With the earth madness.

When from the mould again,
Spurning disaster,
Spring-shoots unfold again,
Follow thou faster
Out of the drear domain
Of dark, defeat, and pain,
Praising the Master.

There is a fine gravity of emphasis in the accents which carries us beyond the associations of the annual spring madness. Carman uses his dactyls here with the power which measured accents have to give the idea a kind of transcendental force. It is the best part of his lyrical gift, as I have already said, and he is far surer in its exercise than in his often loose way of assembling and mingling the ideas of the higher pantheism. The moulds of his verse are generally established ones, and often, as in this poem, very familiar to us in some well known example, and his strictly measured rhythm is apt therefore to allow fine reminiscences to slip into it; he is rather nonchalant in this respect, too fond of some haunting rhythm from Tennyson or Browning or Longfellow, or even, for that matter, from the Church Hymnal, not to use it when it comes naturally in his way. But he has plenty of his own, for his rhythm is never a mechanical mould but has real vitality of accent. Often in his simplest lyrics, specially in them, indeed, there is the same charm of spontaneity you find in folk-songs where the language has no logic but that of a cry or a wild desire. The early Grand Pré volume is full of such verse under the shelter of its vague symbolism. It was the native mystical strain in him which did not altogether thrive under philosophic

development; but he likes to indulge it at times in its pure form, as in those little snatches of verses shyly stowed away on the side covers of his volumes:

> Nothing I brought to the inn
> But the traveller's cloak I wore;
> And that, when I came away,
> I needs must drop by the door.

or—

> Then get you down to the sea, my lads,
> And go you forth, my dears,
> You have reaped the tide, you must sow the tide,
> As it was, these thousand years.

In his middle period his cosmic philosophy is busy moulding this mystic symbolism into more definite forms of thought and vision, the old poetic pantheism and transcendentalism furnishing one line of development and the new evolutionary naturalism another. Both live together in his poetry mostly in sufficient harmony, unless they are brought too close to each other as in his expansion of the Pan myth. His most ambitious poems do not perhaps satisfy the critical sense so well as his simpler; the touch is uncertain, the thought rising and falling between fine gleams and the high commonplaces of culture. The higher he goes, the less fundamental the form of originality in his thought. I think his centenary poem on Shelley may be his supreme achievement at this high level; it is full of conventions but there is great vigour of style in it and brilliancy of imaginative vision.

But with all this variety of tones and methods Carman was not yet at the end of his tether. His invention, if it is not strongly original in artistic forms, is at least

lively and copious. What perhaps distinguishes most his later poetry is a new type of composition in pieces like "On the Plaza", "A Painter's Holiday", "The Man with the Tortoise", and "Mirage", in which his treatment of his subject is less purely lyrical in tone and style and seeks to present more of the ordinary movement of life, and in a more familiar realistic way. He evidently felt some changes that were taking place in the world of art and literature. He had no real contact with the new esoteric schools of poetry in France and their psychological development of *la poésie pure*, but as he saw things in America, the old lyrical romanticism was dying out and the feeling of the time was all for a closer realism and direct representation of the movement of life. Here too it was Browning that helped him most. I have already noticed the influence of Browning's lyrical monologue on Carman. In poems like "The Man with the Tortoise" and "On the Plaza" it is Browning's narrative style and more epical form of composition that is the model, with its realistic and familiar details; the street scene, for example, with vivid pictures of everyday life, swift side glances at things with crisp comment, then the psychological illumination of this commonplace experience, or the moment's magical surprise, perhaps by chance encounter or disclosure which gives us a vision of the ideal possibilities in it.

Carman had already begun to try this type in the last book of Vagabondia songs. In "The Man with the Tortoise", which appears in that collection, the scene is a walk through the streets of Paris with a friend; lively

narrative with the touches so familiar in Browning's dramatic monologue:

> We had turned from your door in the rue Vignon,
> The third on the left from the Madeleine. . . .
> Forget it? There's no forgetting when one
> Is come at length to his Castle in Spain.

Then there is some well-placed psychological musing on the way in which the soul may seem to slumber in the midst of the everyday movement of life but wakes up, in the artist at least, at the first call when the right thing appears, though it may seem only a trifle to others:

> The servants' gossip of eye and ear
> May surge and hum at her door in spring
> Of the pageant of beauty drawing near,
> But she—she is watching a stranger thing!
>
> The myriad rabble of fact and form
> May gleam till the senses dance with glee;
> But calm, unmoved as the very norm
> And centre of being, muses she
>
> Indifferent to loveliness, line or hue,
> Till a chance bird-wing or a slant sun-ray
> May fall as prompt as an actor's cue,
> And there is her part. So it was that day.

That is the *mise-en-scène* and you see how well Carman can make Browning's manner and vision his own. The phrases have at times all the vigour of the master. The incident that follows, with its illuminating experience, has not the sureness of the master in such things. The poet and his friend happen to see a workman on the street who is carrying a tortoise in his hand and whistling as he goes along. The animal has pushed its head out of

its shell to hear the music. So the poet thinks at any rate, and the fact suggests to him all the mystery of the way in which cosmic life, sense and soul alike, vibrates to the influence of rhythm. Carman drenches the incident in poetic fancy.

. . . . . .

The least of wild things under the spell,
Of the last and humblest of Orpheus' race.

A fragment from some Greek idyllist,
The plain good look of the bolder text,
Preserving for us the bolder gist
Of a simple age and a life unvexed.

Did the beast recall how the syrinx blew
When his father Pan first notched a reed?
Was it some familiar note he knew
In the workman's whistle that made him heed?

Did there wake remembrance dim and large
Of the drench and glamour, the mist and gleam
Of a morning once by the shining marge
And murmurous run of a Dorian stream?

Or was it only the reedy plash
Of a Norman river, sunny and small
. . . . . .
So still, as for very life he feared
To lose one note of the wild sweet strain.
Ah, mortal, blow till thy breath has cleared
Ages of dust from a haunted brain!

That is a very fanciful use of the cosmic vision. Perhaps the tortoise was only feeling uncomfortably jiggled in the hand of the workman. It rather recalls a story Peter McArthur tells how Carman lugged him along one day to a big Broadway building to hear the chirping of a

cricket which he had discovered there, but which turned out on a careful inspection by McArthur to be only the creaking of an elevator. What McArthur liked best in Carman was the mystical gleam in his earlier poetry, but he was not so fond, he hints, of some common substitutes in his later work. Carman's way of idealizing everyday experience in this more realistic type of poem, in "On the Plaza" and "A Painter's Holiday", has too much of the facile romantic in it to get either below the surface, or well above it as he does in light graceful idylls like "The House of Idiedaily". In "On the Plaza", which appears in his volume of *Later Poems*, there is the sober art of his later period; the composition is well kept together, without loose excursiveness. The poet is sitting with a friend at the window of a café on the Plaza, and tells in excellent octosyllabic verse very measured, but firmly moulded, and, as always, alive in its accents, what he saw there, General Sherman in his golden blaze

> St. Gaudens' hero, gaunt and grim,
> Rides on with Victory leading him;

the asphalt pavement wet after showers with the afternoon sunset gilding its pools; one or two passersby described with brief graphic traits; a brief summary of the conversation, "talking idly—books or art"; then a group of three Italians, a man, a woman, and girl, street-singers, cross the square, dragging a hurdy-gurdy with them. There is not much said about the man or the girl, but the woman is made an ideal of natural womanhood, a lively Neapolitan companion to that staider peasant girl of

Lombardy in "The Italian in England" . . . a laughing queen,

> Bright as a poppy, strong and free.
> What likelier land than Italy
> Breeds such abandon? Confident
> And rapturous in mere living spent
> Each moment to the utmost, there
> With broad, deep chest and kerchiefed hair,
> With head thrown back, bare throat, and waist
> Supple, heroic and free-laced, . . .
>
> This splendid woman, chaffed and talked,
> Did half the work, made all the cheer
> Of that small company.
>
> No fear
> Of failure in a soul like hers
> That every moment throbs and stirs
> With merry ardour, virile hope,
> Brave effort, nor in all its scope
> Has room for thought or discontent, . . .
>
> A simple heiress of the earth
> And all its joys by happy birth,
> . . . . . How rare
> A personality was there!

What is actually seen, the characteristic Italian *desinvoltura* and the rich bloom of Italian womanhood is rightly given there, and the whole of it might of course be true. Yet one feels the idealization is too facile, too unevidenced, a conjectural rose-coloured vision of the type by an admiring but alien gazer who is not so well acquainted with the Rosa or Marietta who blooms in the interiors of Castellamare or Pescara as d'Annunzio is. One would not guarantee that this "rare personality" and "heiress of the earth" did not sulk savagely when Luca or

Peppe stole out to the café alone, or that she had not what the gossips in her native quarter call *lu difetto delle cinque dita*, in Shakespearean phrase, an itching palm.

In "A Painter's Holiday" and "Mirage" the poet uses the dramatic monologue to penetrate into the inner world of the artist's creative life and suggest the depth of aesthetic feeling from which the ideal vision comes, the moment of illumination, of enchanted experience. The first is an idealization of a matinée star, a young female dancer seen in her stage performance in a vaudeville show on Broadway. It begins with some lines which follow too closely a famous passage in "Bishop Blougram's Apology" ("Just when we're safest there's a sunset touch . . . and that's enough . . ."), repeats the meditation on the soul's awakening in "The Man with the Tortoise", and ends with the old romantic chant:

> Such mystic beauty might have shone
> In Sardes or in Babylon,
> To bring a satrap to his doom
> Or touch some lad with glory's bloom.

"Mirage" is a much higher effort to interpret the inward experience of the artist, in spite of some obscurity in its construction. Scenery and atmosphere are excellently given, with a clear and vivid simplicity of style that makes the vision real for us. Of course he repeats with his usual callousness the landscape of "The Path to Sankoty", the same traits and epithets, the same transcendental similitude of the lovely grandeur of the world's first dawn, a favourite *clìché* of his; but it is all done well enough to be welcome.

At little 'Sconset by the moors,
With the sea thundering by its doors,
Its grassy streets, and gardens gay
With hollyhocks and salvia.
. . . . . .
One day of days
I strolled the silent path that strays
Between the moorlands and the beach
From Siasconset, till you reach
Tom Nevers Head, the lone last land
That fronts the ocean, lone and grand
As when the Lord first bade it be
For a surprise and mystery.
A sailless sea, a cloudless sky,
The level lonely moors, and I
The only soul in all that vast
Of colour made intense to last!
The small white sea-birds piping near;
The great soft moor-winds; and the dear
Bright sun that pales each crest to jade,
Where gulls glint fishing unafraid.

Here man, the godlike, might have gone
With his deep thought, on that wild dawn
When the first sun came from the sea,
Glowing and kindling the world to be, . . .

What follows may not be a very typical crisis in the experience of a painter, but it seems to speak of a crisis in that of the poet himself and to indicate the change in his cosmic vision of nature, the subsidence of that mystical idealism which attributed to the humblest growth of mother earth a fullness of contact with the creative will from which man had everything to learn and from which he drew his better life.

As I sat there and mused (the way
We painters waste our time, you say!)

On the sheer loneliness and strength
Whence life must spring, there came at length
Conviction of the helplessness
Of earth alone to ban and bless.
. . . . . .
And then a revelation came,
In subtle, sudden, lovely guise,
. . . . . .
I knew sheer beauty without soul
Could never be perfection's goal,
Nor satisfy the seeking mind
. . . . . .
. . . The lovely things that haunt
Our senses with an aching want,
And move our souls, are like the fair
Lost garments of a soul somewhere.
Nature is naught, if not the veil
Of some great good which must prevail—

That might be taken as Carman's poetic farewell to the cosmic idealism of nature which found the glory of the earth in a bluebird's song and an ultimate revelation in the growth of the fir and the aster. It is from another region now that the meaning of the universe is borne in upon him. "The House of space and time grows tense as if with rapture's imminence", and "the great worth of life" becomes clear with the vision of a beloved familiar face which here somehow crosses the horizon and turns the majestic panorama of sea and sky into a mere framework for itself—"what better use for earth and sky?" And so the painter conceived and painted his picture. The ecstatic moment of conception is described in a way that shows how Carman can still colour his new realism with mystic exaltation:

While I, a worshipper at the shrine,
For very longing grew divine,
Borne upward on earth's ecstasy,
And welcomed by the boundless sky.
A mighty prescience seemed to brood
Over that tenuous solitude
Yearning for form, till it became
Vivid as dream and live as flame,
Though magic art could never match,
The vision, I have tried to catch,—
All earth's delight and meaning grown
A lyric presence loved and known.

Carman's transition here is an embarrassed attempt to reconcile two different ways of feeling life. He makes the passage from the one to the other in a cloud of transcendental phrases which make an erotic experience the natural culmination of the cosmic contemplation of nature.

What follows is in a style of quite unmystical earthly rapture:

A vivid, questing human face
. . . . . .

A full dark head of clustered curls
Round as an emperor's, where meet
Repose and ardour, strong and sweet,
Distilling from a mind unmarred
The glory of her rapt regard.

There are fine tones in "Mirage", the *mise-en-scène* is good and the poet has sought his highest key of meditative musing. That bit of landscape painting is his best and brings headland, sea, and skyline, and solitude, before us with quiet effective touches. As a composition, however, the poem has not the clear contours of "On the

Plaza" or "A Painter's Holiday". There is something mixed and indefinite in its conception, as if the poet had hesitated between the idea of a poem in Browning's manner of illuminating the inward experience of the artist, and the idea of contrasting nature's grand indifference with the sympathy the human soul seeks in love, but had ended by combining both in the peculiar half-mystic vision of the lyric woman and the final rhapsody on the dark head of clustered curls. Cytherea's car is passing again and bears away our poet with his lyre to the isles.

The poems I have been considering represent a serious effort of Carman to use a form of composition less dependent on lyrical exaltation than his usual style and more capable of presenting the concrete aspect of life with epical fullness and objectivity of vision. But even in them the lyrical hyperbole takes command of his style to the detriment of the critical and reflective faculty; the quality of his observation is damaged by it, made secondary and subservient to its call and kept working in old romantic grooves. That may seem to be an unsympathetic judgment, but a critical estimate of Carman has to show why he with his genuine lyrical gift, great descriptive power and lively imagination leaves only a clouded and ambiguous impression of genius in his higher efforts. From the beginning he has been accustomed to express the imaginative reach of his thought in symbolical phrases which carry him beyond the world of definable experience to a world of vague confines and mystic horizons. It is a style which raises conceptions from a measurable place in the world of realities to some immeas-

ureable power of suggestion in a world without logical limits. He moves habitually and best in an atmosphere of mystical reverie or unconfined exaltation where the reality is only a stepping stone into regions of phantasy, a fragment in the whole; and he can give that fragment well. When his subject is happily chosen for such voyages to the Land of Heart's Desire, as it often is in his lighter lyrics, his tones are pure and his touch excellent. But this fine form of phantasy is a difficult thing to sustain in its purity. Sometimes it degenerates into mere mystical or hyperbolical intensification of the idea. "Peony" which began so well ends in poetic *blague:*

> For Peony, my Peony,
> Hath strength to make me whole,
> She gives her heart of beauty
> For the healing of my soul.

In longer poems it is still more difficult except with the help of allegory which Carman therefore uses freely. "Off Monomoy", for example, is genial phantasy work built on its little fragment of reality skilfully pictured: a yacht becalmed at noon on "an oily summer swell" in Nantucket Sound, then the romantic vision of castled cities with turret and spire framing themselves on the horizon "toward Spain", symbols to the poet partly of brave Spanish and Portuguese sea adventure of long ago and finally of the great adventure of life in general.

> And yet no pealing notes
> Within those belfries be,
> Save echoes from the throats
> Of ship-bells lost at sea.

For none shall anchor there
Save those who long of yore,
When tide and wind were fair,
Sailed and came back no more.

. . . . . .

Even so our city of hope
We mortal dreamers rear
Upon the perilous slope
Above the deep of fear;

. . . . . .

Lord of the summer sea,
Whose tides are in thy hand,
Into immensity
The vision at thy command

Fades now, and leaves no sign,—
No light, nor bell, nor buoy,—
Only the faint low line
Of dangerous Monomoy.

There are the usual reminiscences or repetitions; the usual commonplace moralizing, Carman's stock-in-trade that way is not select; but the poem has a fine clear purity of tone which renders the poet's visionary mood excellently, and there is at times the untranslateable logic of the lyrical cry in its simple language. "Lord of the summer sea": nowhere else would that invocation do, but here becalmed at noon in our oily summer swell, it is entirely right. The tone echoes Longfellow's at times, but I like Longfellow's tone in Carman almost better than in Longfellow himself.

In his later poems Carman's mystical fancy dying down or discouraged by its native form often finds shelter in the pious legends or occultism of the Middle Ages, especially those saintly tales which still linger in the bor-

derland of Christian faith. His favourite ground here is the legend of the Three Kings from the East and Jewish traditions of the three Archangels. The atmosphere of the "Far Eastern country", the mystical light on the events and the symbolical figures are as congenial to him as mediaeval tales were to the author of *The Golden Legend*. Gaspar, "whose wealth was counted by city and caravan", Melchior, the seer, and Balthazar, "the blameless who loved his fellowman", or the archangel Rafael and his host in liveries of gold prophesying in song of the power of love, Gabriel and his host in silver and blue singing the power of reason to penetrate to the truths of the universe, Michael and his angels, in scarlet, singing the energy which shall give man dominion over all created things. Sometimes the strain has the simplicity of a child's hymn or a Christmas carol, it is at its highest in "At the Making of Man". Just as the mystical or half-mystical reverie often gives Carman's inventive faculty its happiest impulses so in a certain type of poem the lyrical vigour and rush of his style seem to depend upon an unconfined exaltation of the theme which allows him to move without limits in an atmosphere of ecstatic ideas. It is a hyperbolical or rhetorical intensification of the fact which often leaves us cold from its very excess. In "The Givers of Life", however, one of the more remarkable poems of this later period, he has found a subject which bears the continuous strain of the ecstatic superlative with more grace than usual. It is a poem in praise of womanhood and of the part women have played in the development of humanity. Woman's instinct, the poet sings truly

enough, is part of the hidden wisdom of the universe, her knowledge is "older than speech", irresistible as the tides of the sea, a mystical endowment she has from the eternal Cause in order to assure the elevation of the race.

Who called us forth out of darkness and gave us the gift of life,
Who set our hands to the toiling, our feet in the field of strife?

Darkly they mused, predestined to knowledge of viewless things,
Sowing the seed of wisdom, guarding the living springs.

Little they reckoned privation, hunger or hardship or cold,
If only the life might prosper, and the joy that grows not old.
. . . . . .

Who looked on the world before them, and summoned and chose
our sires,
Subduing the wayward impulse to the will of their deep desires?

Sovereigns of ultimate issues under the greater laws,
Theirs was the mystic mission of the eternal cause;
. . . . . .

If we be the builders of beauty, if we be the masters of art,
Theirs were the gleaming ideals, theirs the uplift of the heart.
. . . . . .

Lavish of joy and labour, broken only by wrong,
These are the guardians of being, spirited, sentient and strong.

Theirs is the starry vision, theirs the inspiriting hope,
Since Night, the brooding enchantress, promised that day should
ope.

Lo, we have built and invented, reasoned, discovered and planned,
To rear us a palace of splendour, and make us a heaven by hand.

We are shaken with dark misgiving, as kingdoms rise and fall;
But the women who went to found them are never counted at all.

Versed in the soul's traditions, skilled in humanity's lore,
They wait for their crown of rapture, and weep for the sins of war.

And behold they turn from their triumphs, as it was in the first of days,
For a little heaven of ardour, and a little heartening of praise.

He could not have chosen a subject which suits his idealizing vision better, or shows better the delicacy of impression and the high generalizing faculty which serve it. That exalted bird's-eye view of our human history and that rushing stream of superlative characterizations display what is best in his thinking. It is all in blue and gold, of course, like the canvas on which Fra Angelico paints his saintly women, though the Fra when he likes, can do a bit of sensuous reality in the feminine figure as effectively as Raphael. Some might think its lyrical soar is too near the exaggerations of Feminism; it does remind one a little of Henry James's ironical presentation of the feminine discourses of Verena and Olive in *The Bostonians* ("it was they who had done all the waiting and taken all the wounds", etcetera). But there is truth enough in Carman's vision of the eternal feminine to give it substance. Woman is more responsive than man to some primary instincts which keep us in the sound ways of nature, and such instincts work profoundly in the social construction through the emotions and affections. What a French writer, André Gide I think, calls *la prévoyance physiologique de la femme* is instinctively imperious rather than motivated by the ideals of Reason, which it has been the work of men to implant in civilization. But though Carman's idealism does not recognize shading, the poem is a very vigorous production with a flowing amplitude of style which maintains its exalted note im-

pressively. It expresses eloquently not perhaps the major truth of social evolution or world-construction, but at least the truths which lie forgotten in its shade, the shade, that is, of Charlemagnes and Augustines, of Luthers and Newtons, of Shakespeares, Napoleons, and Goethes who renewed for us when the time came outworn threads in the warp and woof of civilization. But if the conscious ideals of modern Feminism are often an up-stream pull against irresistible currents of nature, Carman's "The Givers of Life" has also admirable expressions of the natural heroism and pathos of womanhood:

Truly they measure the lightness of trappings and ease and fame,
For the teeming desire of their yearning is ever and ever the same.

(And that is not just the superficial side of the thing either.)

To crown their lovers with gladness, to clothe their sons with delight,
And see the men of their making lords in the best man's right.

The long six-foot anapestic with the usual variations is a facile measure but a favourite one with Swinburne and Browning for high lyrical chants like this. Carman handles it with his customary vigour in the use of measured movement and accents.

Carman's latest volumes cannot call for much notice except as illustrating some new interests that were entering his life. Two volumes of poetry, *The Daughters of the Dawn* and *Earth Deities*, published in 1913 and 1914, were written by him in collaboration with Mrs. Mary Perry King. Anyone who wants to see the interest

he was taking at this time in Mrs. King's plan of education by means of "the three rhythmical arts" may read his pamphlet entitled *Moonshine* (the name of Mrs. King's country place) and his prose volume on *The Making of Personality* which sets forth his views of cultural education and personal "poise". It was not an illogical development in one whose poetry had been mainly a hymn to the aesthetic plenitude of life, but it is not important poetically. *The Daughters of the Dawn* may be regarded as illustrating with historical examples the view of woman's influence in the race outlined in "The Givers of Life". Carman in a preface explains that the examples "were selected as typical chiefly of the liberal and beneficent power of woman's nature in her leadership and ascendancy in the life of the spirit and the destiny of the world." He also quotes, from "one of Edward Carpenter's wise books", a passage prophesying of the resurrection of "the primal woman", with her grand untamed eyes, in the type of "the future Woman", who will "help us to undo the bonds of death which encircle the present society". It may be so. Tacitus long ago noted the tendency of the Germanic race to find something sacred and prophetic in womanhood, a view which seemed strange to the realistic Roman and is still not so distinctive of the Latin races. Those advanced advocates of progress, Marinetti and the Futurists, professed just the opposite point of view, that women were a hindrance to emancipation on the whole because of their tendency, as the weaker sex, to cling to protective social conventions, their readiness to be deflected by moods, and their awful contempt for

abstract ends and ideals when their passions and attachments are involved.

The Daughters of the Dawn is a series of brief lyrical dramas. In each drama Time speaks a prologue explaining the historical situation and a Poet recites a lyric chorus explaining the scene on the stage when the curtain rises; then two persons, Eve and Adam, the Queen of Sheba and Solomon, Sappho and Phaon, Izeyl and Buddha, Mary and the Angel, Zenobia and the Emperor Aurelian, Jeanne d'Arc and her father, Vittoria Colonna and Michel Angelo, say something to each other on the crisis which is taking place in their lives. The whole of each drama does not run to more than a hundred and twenty or a hundred and fifty lines.

In *Eve* the prologue bewails the lonely condition of Adam before Eve was made—

> Silent derision waited on his toil;
> And ever the world-sorrow bore him down,
> His great heart beaten by futility.
> . . . . . .

Then one morning—

> . . . there emerged among the gentle hills,
> Loving, humane, mysterious, the form
> Of beauty made in likeness of his dream.

The poet then recites the chorus:

> Who is this ardour-paled
> O'er her blood's coral stain,
> Veiled as mountains are veiled
> In a mist of blue rain?

She is fair as the great winter moonlight and frail as Aprilian flowers.

. . . . . .

Eve then speaks expressing her wonder at the beauty around her, at the "shadowy woods and shining river, the flowers and the birds"; she rejoices in the sense of life, in the reflection of her own beauty in the stream, but complains of the loneliness:

> Nothing answers to my calling!
> Nothing solaces my longing!
> Why are all things unresponding?
> Why is all my being lonely?
> Is this Paradise?

Then she sees Adam.

> Through the shadows there's a shadow
> Coming. Through the trees I see him. . . .
> Like me . . . stronger! Ah, his presence
> Makes me gladder, gladder, gladder. . . .
> What am I to thee?

Adam's speech expresses a longing that has been satisfied now:

> Have I not imaged thy face?
> Out of sunrise and dreams?
> Have I not sought thy trace,
> Through the spring woods and streams?
> . . . . . .
> I stretched forth my hands to the sun,
> I breathed my prayer through the rain,
> I called to the clouds that run;
> They answered me not again.
> . . . . . .

Thy glistening bosom swells
In the light of thy wondrous hair,
Like a sunlit hill top that tells
The watcher day is there.

. . . . . .

Here let the sun stand still,
The wandering stream be stayed,
The shadow rest on the hill,
The wind play low in the glade!
For I have found Paradise,
And dread has lost its power.
Here let the great moon rise
On an enchanted hour!

Curtain and Music

For the remaining dramas the descriptions of some of these daughters of the dawn must suffice. This is Balkis, dark Queen of Sheba, appearing before King Solomon:

And her strength is as water, beholding her splendor and knowledge expand.
Her walk has the sway
Of the sea in the wind,—
The strong supple play
Of a panther of Ind,—
The magic of night is about her; her sorcery who shall withstand!

This is Sappho in her garden at Mitylene with Atthis, Anactoria, Gorgo and the rest about her; but sighing for Phaon:

She is vibrant and warm
As a meadow at noon;
She is lonely as storm
Or the cloud-sailing moon;
She is glad as new friendship unbroken, and sad as old loves that expire.

This is Izeyl, "the enamoured of Buddha" as she waits for the sage's visit:

> She moves like the smoke,
> As it swoons on still air,
> When the censers evoke
> Old gods from their lair;
> The sway of her body is music more maddening than incense or prayer.
>
> The desire of the heart
> The delight of the eye,
> She knows not apart,
> To forego nor deny,
> For love is the sum of her being, and beauty is all of her gear.

And this is Vittoria Colonna, in the gardens of the Colonna Palace in Rome, "moving through a slow ballade", as Michel Angelo approaches singing *Amor vincit omnia.*

> Her rare jewels glance,
> Her linked girdle slips
> With each turn of the dance
> To slash and eclipse,
> As she moves through an eloquent measure, with an old Latin song on her lips.

It is not a very happy representation of these two grave elderly personages. Each woman, at the end of her discourse, asks the man she comes to, "What am I to thee?" The most dramatic of the pieces is Izeyl, the story of the courtesan who sought to tempt Buddha but is converted by him to the Perfect Way of Life. She dances an Indian dance before him which symbolizes all the stage "coquetry, enticement and the overtures of love", becoming "reckless in its sorceries", but, as Buddha seems obdurate, it begins to express "jealousy, anger, and finally melting

sorrow and surrender". Buddha praises her beauty, but preaches to her the "Great Renouncement" as the only cure for the strife of life.

> Crave nothing! But in kindness with rejoicing
> Follow the common highway unto peace.
> . . . . . .
>
> Whoso is tranquil, diligent, undaunted,
> Not overcome with riches, nor with cares,
> Free from all anger, arrogance, and baseness,
> Seeking the truth. . . .
> Serving his fellows with illumined mind,—
> However slowly shall escape from darkness,
> And all the weight of sorrow leave behind.

But to himself he soliloquizes in doubt—What avails the unimpassioned calm?

> . . . the fair soul within thee calls my soul.
> My manhood strains at touch of joy so tender
> To lay aside the austere staff and bowl.

But Izeyl is converted, puts off her jewels, abandons her house and park and goes forth into the world to tread the Perfect Way. The story, like that of Balkis and some of the others, does not seem to illustrate very well woman's "ascendancy in the life of the spirit and the destiny of the world".

At the end of the book there is an Epilogue in which the MODERN WOMAN is seen standing in the foreground, while the Chorus sings her graces and virtues. She is to have the ardour of Eve, Zenobia's pride, be tender as Sappho and wise as Vittoria, be "soft with the beauty of Balkis, sublime with the love of Izeyl", be able "to go

forth to battle with Barak or don the steel corslet of Jeanne d'Arc—"

So in "Beyond the Gamut", his ideal man was a combination of all possible endowments and faculties. Such an unhuman accumulation of virtues merely distends the imagination without warming it. But Carman's idealism does not know the use of shading.

Perhaps these two volumes should be regarded rather as a pleasant libretto for the poses, dancing and chorus music which are combined in Mrs King's "new educational movement" by means of the "three rhythmic arts", than as independent poems.

X

SHIFTING CURRENTS

The intimate connection of Carman's literary career with the United States had brought him good fortune both in the way of interior stimulus and in providing a better market than Canada could give him in those days. The popular Vagabondia songs were American in their origin at least. Nor had it tempted him out of his steady poetic course, as it had tempted Roberts, into side ventures of the novel or stories of wild-animal life, or any other of the lines which may be so profitable for the poet in the American market. But though the connection with the States was so helpful to him in some ways, it was not all gain for him. As we have seen the journalistic activity so common there amongst all but a few of the best poets, and proper enough for those who are only seeking to make good a professional position in the band-waggon of the day, encouraged careless habits of composition in him. While one has constantly to admire the deftness and genial freedom of his style, one has to note too often the easy-going lapses into makeshifts and poetic commonplace, indicating that the thoughts have not been let ripen into their best form. It is the influence of an atmosphere in which art does not get a true finish. In that

journalistic world where he sought his bread editors had not much use for such a standard, and in fact it was becoming difficult to apply to the new poetry, to forty or fifty lines written in Whitman's prose-poem style, or in a lyrical staccato which got its merely rhetorical accent from the manner of printing it. The idea of the poet had come to have little in common with that of Horace. That would give us five or six poets in a century, or say, in our larger world, a score or two, but in the modern point of view the poet was rather one of five hundred or a thousand mouthpieces of the general spiritual sentiment and current thoughts of the day, an agreeable or poignant expression of its emotionality and imaginations, its tastes in the sententious or the mystical. Carman had aimed at something more, at a body of poetry which should be a poetic and philosophic synthesis of life in nature and in man. The philosophic thought in his poetry had not attracted any attention from critics in the States. Perhaps there was a want of the supreme Song that marks itself unmistakably as a new force in the thought of the time, but in working out his idea, he had produced, besides a number of very fine lyrics, some of the most poetic allegories we have of the spirit imprisoned in its tenement of clay. It is in that allegorical form that his philosophic and his poetic instincts unite best.

Although he owed so much to the literary culture of the States one may say that three distinct literary traditions are very equally represented in his poetry and find a natural fusion in it. As a nature poet he is distinctively Canadian, very sensitive to wide general impres-

sions of wild nature and its life, and rather shy of near enclosing horizons. The impressions his eye gathers are those most characteristic of the northern sea-coast and forest lands, the headlands and clear blue skies of the North, "the sea singing in the marshes", upland clearings with acres of the goldenrod or the sumach, the song of the hermit thrush, "the pure strong mornings", and so forth. Even when he is describing some glen in the Catskills or the moorland path to Sankoty, it is the same atmosphere that keeps him company. Quite a number of his poems are memories of pleasant days in New England orchards and gardens, but the call of the native landscape, of the maple leaf in autumn, or something equally Canadian, is the strongest in him:

> I need the pure strong mornings,
> When the soul of day is still,
> With the touch of frost that kindles
> The scarlet on the hill.

But in all that concerns literary art he belongs entirely to the English tradition, even in the narrower sense of the words; his style, his verse forms and rhythm have the classic regularity, smoothness and flow of the old English lyrical school only with a sharper Canadian accent and a crisp familiarity of phrase in his lighter verse especially. In the higher lyric his more modern development is in the line of Browning's dramatic style ("My master still"). His literary culture is predominantly English; too narrowly so, perhaps, for a philosophic poet. Shelley, Keats and Browning are the nearest great stars in the literary heavens for him. In Browning's philosophic opti-

mism he finds a particular support. Longfellow and Poe are only haunting strains from his boyhood. Whitcomb Riley and the Around-the-Home poetry of the Middle West gets only theoretical appreciation from him; but Whitman's "free and afoot on the open road" is at least a chord in his poetic Bohemianism, and Whitman's verse though it has no influence on his own is noticed as containing rhythmical "intricacies" beyond those of the traditional prosody. His ideal of poetry is that of the great Victorians in its reverences, its general elevation of tone and its pure-blooded romanticism.

But outside of the native strain and this English literary culture there is a great deal by which he is attached to the American tradition. The quality of his thought is in many ways American, the Americanism of the nineties which had an intellectual sympathy with democracy without any personal concessions to democratic vulgarity. He has something of the free and easy American gait, unembarrassed by the sense of limits. His philosophic thought with its mystical tendencies came mostly from the transcendentalism of New England, and reflected the spiritual optimism which permitted itself no doubt of the benevolent wisdom in nature, or of the rule of the Oversoul in the world-process. He had had the benefit of much that suited his temperament and talent in the States, but he had also to experience some of the vicissitudes of fortune which are perhaps a little harsher in that country than elsewhere. All that refined New England transcendentalism, the poetic pantheism and the philosophic optimism that had spoken so powerfully in

the higher thought of the nineteenth century, as well as the pure-blooded romanticism of the Victorian period had begun to lose ground at the turn of the century. It was old and familiar, and though Carman had clothed it in a new style and given it some new symbols his philosophic construction was not strong enough to keep a place against the tide. It was too golden-hued in its exaltations and used too many haloes. The tone of poetry and the higher literature had for some time indicated that a general change was taking place in the spirit of the age. The currents of aesthetic decadentism and brutal naturalism had done little more than ruffle the surface, but the doubt of any absolute truth in our knowledge of the universe, the underlying uncertainty in the mystical tradition of humanity was emerging into clearer expression of itself. The age had become more questioning, less ready to accept transcendental answers and solutions, more inclined to seek what answer could be got in verifiable experiences and realistic values. It was an age for William James and Santayana to speak in rather than for Hegel and Royce, with their philosophy of the absolute. The change was marked enough in English literature, though it was modified there by the native tendencies to conciliation. You see it in a highly representative form in the later naturalistic novel of Hardy, in his lyrics, unpublished as long as the great swell of Victorian verse was holding the ear of the public, but appearing before the end of the century; and in Housman's Shropshire poems. In both, the ironies of life come into strong relief, with plainer speech and cadences than the Victorian, yet it is a

poetic realism, beautifully softened and humanized by the poetry of local traditions and memories. In others optimism and romance are taking new ground; pathetic little restorations and recalls of romance in Barrie, Scotch reminiscences at first, admirably true to life both in their native humour and their sub-tragic gravity, but latterly in fine new forms of phantasy drama. There are strong renewals too of both optimism and romance in Kipling, sought for in the deep primitive energies of active and adventurous life at the frontiers of the Empire, but steadily growing profounder in its wide embrace of modern life; and along with it a strong new speech which was not afraid of the word or oath of the camp or the canteen, but could keep the heights when it liked. In the Celtic group also there was a new enrichment of romanticism, particularly in its Irish note; in Yeats a new mystic symbolism, lyrically pure and beautiful though highly nostalgic in feeling and too exclusive in its theories of the esoteric in poetry. But the balance was splendidly restored by Synge whose hand was equally sure in the realistic truth of the *Playboy* and in the tragic beauty of *Deirdre*. His creative power was too strong to seek any support from theories, but his view that poetry should be of the kind to be "read by strong men, and thieves and deacons, not by little cliques only" does not lean to the esoteric side. Younger poets of course came in with new songs, some helpful, some the common heroics and mystifications of the day, some the refined analysis and rhythms of disillusion. Rupert Brooke illustrates perhaps best the new psychological exploration of the

sub-conscious which was being called in to help the old eschatological faith in its decay. There was to be too little of his work, but the little is amongst the finest notes of a new poetic faith.

In the United States the change came somewhat later, in the second decade of the century, but was in some ways more violent and eruptive as it represented a greater variety of democratic instincts and mixed traditions rising into free expression of themselves. The tradition of Whitman, the early Whitman of the Democratic Chants, was perhaps in the lead, but it was only one amongst other impulses, some native and some regional, others reflecting outside aesthetic influences, which gave it a varied and rather turbulent character at the surface. I have outlined the chief features of the movement, by some critics called the American Renascence, in a sequel to this book, as contributing along with the new French theories of poetry and certain developments in English verse, to explain the point of view from which I have treated Carman's work. Very much of it of course belongs only to the daily stream of verse, reverberating echoes of the voice of the day, occasionally reaching personal distinction and often interesting as representative documents of the time without being either a fully critical or a supreme expression of it. But it is in what is soundest and of most significance in the poetry of the period, the poetry in which one looks for the higher and most clarified expression of American thought, where things are really weighed and tested as to their worth and meaning, that one sees best the change of spirit that was leading

away from the high symbolism and unclouded optimism of the preceding age. And of course it is not so much modified by relics of pieties which have ceased to be really felt or by the flag-waving enthusiasm of the band-waggon. In the poetry of Edwin Arlington Robinson, for example, one feels at once there is full contact with world-thought and a breadth of valuation that is master of its complexities. There is excessive subtlety reacting at times injuriously on the speech which is always wrestling desperately with super-subtle exposure and obscure entanglements of motive; very American in all that as well as in the half-ironical acceptance of moral idiosyncrasies of character, obscure resiliences and redemptions of the soul that do not count in the official record; a psychology as meticulous as that of Henry James. But it is part of the new intricacies and antinomies of character which America gave him to interpret. "To see the part you are of nature" and find nature's compensations there as well as life's ironies. It is the high song full of weighty sentences and strong lines that are the final form of their thought. But it is amongst the things that say farewell for the time to the old transcendentalism and even to its moral values. Emerson, who lived under social conditions that were not so grimy, could judge "the day" of the farm-boy in a Vermont homestead to be as great as "the day" of Charles Quint or Louis the Fourteenth and had hardly a place in his philosophy for such accidental aspects of existence as—

> Not that they slave, but that they do not reap,
> Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.

Arlington Robinson can be a sharp critic of certain impieties in the great democracy:

> Think you to tread for ever down
> The merciless old verities?

In Edgar Lee Masters' first Spoon River series there is an exposure of common life as candid as Crabbe's, though it is more relieved by a half-tender, half-stoical American humour which accepts life as it has been given, that is, as a complex of intrigues, local enmities, foolish ambitions, dishonest successes with gleams of human endurance and silent heroisms shining through it; for the *Spoon River Anthology* is an image of the world, not merely the picture of little town life, though the local colour is so strong. The sharp indictments of official hypocrisy and make-believe, the business struggle that spares no one, the sordid sex tragedies, and the grim ironies of nature and accident are world-wide in their significance. The day at Spoon River is the day of human life in general. His form is a very original invention combining the art of the epitaph and the epigram with that of the fabulist, and so successfully as to create a new literary *genre*. But this modern fable does not use allegory but takes its fiction from the common life of the time. He has all the inventive faculty of the classic fabulist in choosing his type, the individual case which sets some universal truth in a striking light; he has the same wide range and shrewd observation. The form is admirably used in the best examples. There is a fine art in the way he selects just what is essential to make his story

complete. Not a line but tells, and a style that is excellent in the dry lapidary manner of the epitaph and epigram, clear, clean-cut phrase saying all that is needed, the moral obvious as it should be in the fable but getting its point well sharpened by the story.

The schematic ideal underlying the art of the fabulist was discussed exhaustively by Lessing long ago, though I suppose the idea that a man of the eighteenth century has anything to teach an American of the twentieth must seem very old-fashioned. Yet the pure ideals of classic art lie very deep in the constitution of our mind, and I think it is when Masters comes closest to the classical form of composition that he is most successful. The fine condensation of matter and the strong succinct phrase are then at their best. Sometimes his piece extends itself into a little life history with its characteristic lights and shadows, curtly told in that staccato verse which is something intermediate between verse and prose, and ending perhaps with a grim epigram as in "Dora Williams" and "Margaret Fuller Black", or much more rarely with an invigorating moral as in "Lucinda Matlock". It is still formally the epitaph style, clean and terse in phrase, and every detail a master stroke of sympathetic insight. But we could not expect a modern writer to keep within a classical scheme, he must have room to experiment, to give us all he knows without compression from an ideal of art which seems to him a fetter. The Spoon River poem often becomes a pure descant or ordinary monologue of poetic description or philosophic meditation as in "Russell Kincaid" or "Elijah Browning" or

"Wallace Ferguson". His style does not support such philosophic and cryptic sublimities so well. His hand is not so sure when he poetizes and transcendentalizes his matter; we get common heroics or *mystica* that contain nothing worth thinking over. Often also the moral is obvious makeshift, commonplace blown up to look like something oracular; probably the piece was one hurried through to meet the weekly need of *Reedy's Mirror*. And so a great inventive talent that might have given us a collection as finished as La Fontaine's or as Heredia's *Les Trophées* just missed being a summit of art. A great price to pay for the Whitman tradition of cocking your hat as you please and for the loose facility of the pattern prose-poem style. The story of Archibald Higbie, the Spoon River poet, is not all satire and protest. The thread of truth in it is woven double.

In Robert Frost, another writer whose art is of creative quality, one finds also the new realism in the interpretation of life asserting itself strongly. In his New England idylls the haggardness of the common life is not much veiled; it is not so grimy as in Chicago and Pittsburgh, its hardness is relieved on a quiet background of rustic life. In his *North of Boston* idylls the style has a peculiar reticence and the blank verse a dry individuality of accent very suggestive of the dogged undemonstrative Yankee farm life he is telling about; it is a rhythm born of the matter, and a phrase with more in what it leaves unsaid than in what it says. The imaginative background makes itself felt but does not flower poetically in his idyll. Wordsworth's "Michael" was once thought very

severe in its plain rhythms and its realistic picture of a hill farmer's household with its daily toils and cares, though it was skilfully relieved in Wordsworth's manner by touches of the poetry of nature and the moral solaces he finds in life. But the pathos in Frost's rustic idyll is left absolutely bare in the keeping of facts. The resources of the soul are allowed to come to the surface only in a half-spoken word. It is really the "stripped sincerity" of art, to use a phrase which Mrs. Eunice Tietjens applies rather liberally to the "new poetry" in general.

Of course in the general body of American poetry there is always plenty of the current popular optimism, but in the more representative men its basis was changing; it was becoming more a chant of the industrial drive and struggle, its rough buoyancy, its speed and hustle, its command of machinery. In Carl Sandburg's songs of this work-a-day life the optimism rests entirely on what all that can yield in the Here and Now, on the pulse of life in the passing day. It is indifferent to that transcendental sky of humanity with its spiritual and cultural values which sustained the idealism of the older literature. The New and the Present is everything, as long as it is the New and the Present; all that preceded it is "a bucket of ashes", and of course all that will follow it is—for you when the Present is done with you—a blank "ocean of to-morrows"—

> I tell you there is nothing in the world
> only an ocean of to-morrows,
> a sky of to-morrows.

That is the final word of his "Prairie" poem. The only meaning or value of life is its living. There could not be a greater contrast to the transcendental character of Carman's optimism with the highly romantic phrase in which it habitually expressed itself:

> What imperial adventure
> Some wide morning it will be,
> Sweeping into Lonely Haven
> From the chartless round of sea!

As part of the new tendency in the States there was often an attempt to disparage the New England tradition in literature and belittle its great creations in poetry and prose, mostly by writers whose names indicate a race unlikely to have sympathy with that highly Puritan tradition. In Mr. Louis Untermeyer's anthology, one of the very best too in its critical notes, Longfellow, that mighty inventor of epic tales and epic verse whose admirable translations also made his countrymen familiar with the best lyrics of Europe, from Spain to Sweden, is called "provincial" in comparison with Robert Frost.

The new views of versification and style which came in with the "new poetry" were equally disadvantageous to Carman. The critics and poets of the new school who came to the front about 1912 began to regard the old metres and the regular forms of recurrence in the stanza as something which, if not quite obsolete, represented an older, half-antiquated mode: it was a "stringing of iambics and anapaests" which was needlessly cramping to the poet. Would he not express himself more freely, more naturally, if he did not measure his cadences? In partic-

ular what was new in theme or inspiration, an anticipation of the larger poetry of the future, should in its "stern and unstripped sincerity" discard the fetters of the old prosody and use either an unmetrical or unschematized rhythm, practically often undistinguishable from that of prose; or at least a form of free verse, more lyrical in cadence, sometimes with irregular rhymes like the *vers libre* of Régnier and Verhaeren, but generally without the rhyme on which the quality of the French verse depended so much. The practice of the new school was not always consistent with the language they used on the subject. They seemed often to forget that the three most representative poets of the "Renascence,"—Arlington Robinson, Frost, and Vachell Lindsay, were still habitually "stringing iambics and anapaests", and that the emotional feminine lyric of Edna Millay and Sara Teasdale, certainly amongst the finer poetic work of the time, is written in the traditional measures. But the point of view worked all the same. Carman and his contemporaries Vaughan Moody, Richard Hovey, Louise Guiney, Edwin Markham and others began to be treated historically as "transition poets" as Mr. Untermeyer classifies them in his Anthology. That meant in the United States something out of date that did not count in the way the new time was making up its record. There were polite reservations of course, the obligatory compliments to the rhetorical humanitarianism of Markham's "Man with the Hoe", to the "gipsy jollity" and high spirits supposed to be characteristic of Carman and Hovey's Vagabondia songs. In her Anthology Miss Wilkinson chooses as her

example of Carman's poetry his "Lord of My Heart's Elation"; "a beautiful religious lyric" she says, and "quite essentially modern", because "no doctrine is urged upon us in any line of it". Miss Harriet Monroe, editor of that well-known magazine *Poetry* and an ardent champion of the new movement, manages to exclude Carman as well as Kipling from her Anthology. The Van Dorens in their recent book *British and American Literature Since 1890*, rate Hovey as "something less than a true creative poet", and Sandburg as the great poet of "the new order of life in the United States". Perhaps smoke and steel are not so new as all that in the world, nor the thoughts of caboose men, well as Sandburg features them, of such overbearing importance. But the new criticism is fond of grand phrases. The Van Dorens do not notice Carman.

This attitude of the new American criticism may have counted, amongst other things, in making Carman's connection with Canada grow closer in his later years. Canada was less taken up with the doctrines of the American Renascence and the propaganda of prose-poetry. Carman always had warm admirers there of the freshness of his lyrical style and his mystically imaginative vision; but now professional circles, that had been accustomed to discuss whether he or Roberts, or Duncan Campbell Scott, or Lampman, was Canada's best poet, were coming to recognize more the unity of purpose and endeavour which gave higher significance to Carman's work. And so that meeting of the association of the Canadian authors came about in Montreal which gave Carman a new standing in

Canada. Profitable employment on lecturing tours followed and made him widely known personally throughout the whole Dominion. And his personality helped more than is often the case with poets: a tall, big-boned prepossessing figure with a simplicity of poise and manner quietly responsive to anything genuine or well-meant; the features were regular and finely cut under a head of hair that must once have had a lyrical effect. He was not much of a lecturer, he had none of the vitality and popular art of Roberts in that way, and was not so entertaining as Sandburg who brought his banjo with him to the platform to provide music for his verse, and told us that what Kalamazoo was thinking today, the world would be thinking tomorrow. Carman's elocution was poor and he seemed to make little or no preparation for such performances, none certainly of an academic kind. There was some cherubinical indolence in him, a distaste for work that does not come by inspiration; but there was a high spirit also in his unaffected speech and tone, as if he was content to trust to the natural worth of his performance to tell—for what it really was worth.

Carman's *Far Horizons* was published in 1922. There is nothing new in its poetic quality which has the sedate sweetness of age rehearsing old tunes with an art which is now very smooth though with less vivacity than it used to have. The subject, however, the Canadian West with its prairies and mountain ranges and histories of pioneering enterprise furnishes him with new themes and imagery. There is a poem in memory of David Thompson,

an early settler in British Columbia, and a vision of the cities and cultivated fields which one day shall be, and even now have begun to be.

Then far on the dipped horizon where the sailing cloud-tops show,
I saw like a ghost in the sunlight, a prairie schooner go.
And after her laboured others in a trailing caravan—
Lumbering, crude, ill-fitted—but they carried the hope of man.
. . . . . .
Till a picture rose before me like a mirage at sea,
Of the wonders of incantation from Indian jugglery.

And I beheld no longer the voyaging clouds hull-down,
But towers of beautiful cities and homes of many a town,
And over them all was gladness and peace and freedom from care,
And I heard the laughter of children ring on the frosty air.

And over the whispering snowdrift a far-off voice said,
"No man shall injure his neighbour, and none shall make you afraid.
Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world."
Then as the vision faded, the sails of the clouds were furled.

And there, all round about me, real in the noonday sun,
Stood Houses of Learning and Beauty—the vision's fulfillment
begun.

All very benevolent toward that young growth in the West and full of mild pieties, but not remarkable for any originality of vision. He does not capture any mystical secrets from that Western atmosphere as he once did from the shores of Fundy; no mythical Ardise hills in the West nor mysteriously sympathetic tides; nor perhaps anywhere else now. Some of the poems seem like "The Bells of Ys" designed to correct or modify doubtful notes in an older version. And he seems inclined to revise a little his doctrine of the poet's professional obligation to

speak only the pure gospel of optimism. Perhaps the changing attitude of criticism in the United States toward the transcendentalism of Emerson and Royce, and its choice of the new gods that live in steel and smoke and the rattle and race of transportation systems, gives a sharp edge to his lines on "Twilight in Eden":

> We have scorned the belief of our fathers
> And cast their quiet aside,
> To take the mob for our ruler
> And the voice of the mob for our guide.

This spiritual discontent with the harder realism of the new democracy had always smouldered a little under Carman's professional optimism, and now in these later days it occasionally breaks into flame as in the allegory of the mystical city of Shamballah:

> Have you heard of the city of Shamballah,
> That marvellous place in the North,
> That home of the Masters of Wisdom,
> Whence the Sons of the Word are sent forth?
> . . . . . .
> The light-bearing sons of Shamballah,
> They spread the ineffable word.
> And spirits who mocked it were broken,
> And blessed were the spirits that heard.
> . . . . . .
> Their task from Plotinus to Browning
> Was ever and never the same,—
> To replenish the altars of wisdom
> And guard the impalpable flame.
> . . . . . .
> Pure wine of the spirit they gave us,—
> A gladness to make us whole,—
> But we trusted to cunning to save us
> And cunning has cheated our soul.

> The brand of the beast is upon us
> In wantonness, folly and greed.
> We have trampled the torch that should light us,
> And our darkness is ours indeed.

An allegory then to close with; it is his favourite framework for transcendental thought and review, and it gives him vigour and a jet of flame still. . . The line runs as fluently as ever but the phrase has a commoner eloquence.

Postscriptum. Carman died in June, 1929, while the manuscript of this book was in the publisher's hands. He was 68 and when I saw him three years ago, was very well set up and active. It was really still the mellow autumn of life with him, and one could wish it might have been prolonged. But at least his tale was fully told; he had certainly said all that God had given him to say, perhaps a good deal more.

PART II

I

THE TRADITION OF EMERSON AND WHITMAN IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

The inspirational theory of composition has had more real influence on contemporary American literature than anywhere else, more even than it has in the modernist schools of France, where it has always a strong rival in a very cultivated sense of art. Its influence on Carman's poetry is very evident. At times he can speak as if inspiration almost relieved the poet and artist from conscious effort or the need of critical control. Genius he says "cannot take pains for it is an immediate force like gravity and works without effort or consciousness of direction." [1] The genius would need to be without flaw that abandoned itself entirely to such a doctrine. Yet it belongs to one of the highest traditions in American literature, that of Emerson. In him, it is true, it was safe-guarded from abuse in many ways, principally by the tone in which he taught it and by the spiritual and intellectual askesis without which it had no meaning for him. But its development by Walt Whitman made it something essentially different, more popular in its appeal but more liable to misuse.

[1] *The Making of Personality*, p. 371.

The doctrine of free ecstatic expression has a very prominent place in Emerson's teaching. It was part of his revolt against the overformal and oversystematized literary culture of the eighteenth century. In his essay on the poet he writes, "The poet speaks adequately only when he speaks somewhat wildly . . . not with the intellect used as an organ, but with the intellect released from all service and suffered to take its direction from its celestial life." But he is careful to add that it must be the pure "ravishment of the intellect *by coming nearer to the fact*". But though he seems to recognize something specific in the poet's faculty here, he does not confine this divine receptivity or influx to him. So little is it connected with subliminal or imperfectly rationalized forms of consciousness that he extends it to the severely rationalized thought of Spinoza and Kant, who know well where every sentence they write comes from. In his essay on the *Oversoul* where he speaks of this influx almost mystically as a contact which genius by spiritual discipline and labour attains with the Oversoul (a conception which in him seems to float between the transcendent idea of Plotinus and the more rationalistic idea of an immanent universal mind) he classes the poet Herbert and Spinoza and Kant together as sacred teachers in whom there is an influx of the Divine mind. They are of kin, he writes with the fervent mystic who prophesies, "half-insane under the infinitude of his thought". In prophet, preacher, poet and philosophic thinker it is to him virtually the same phenomenon. All genius is religious with him, a manifestation of the soul which in the terminology of that time

he distinguishes rigidly from talent, however brilliant. But, still further, he is far too good an American not to democratize his doctrine of genius or natural inspiration as we might call it. It belongs of right to every man, always under the same conditions of spiritual discipline and unselfish service. In the *Method of Nature* he writes:

> I conceive a man as always spoken to from behind and unable to turn his head and see the speaker. In all the millions who have heard the voice, none ever saw the face . . . the spirit is our unseen pilot. . . . If a man will exactly obey it, it will adopt him so that he shall not any longer separate it from himself in his thought, he shall seem to be it—he shall be it. If he listen with insatiable ears richer and greater wisdom shall be taught him, the sound swells to a ravishing music, he is borne away as with a flood, . . . he is the fool of ideas and leads a heavenly life.

In short it is a doctrine of the spiritual power which lies latent in every man if his life is such as to allow it true and free utterance. Then he may say with the old painter, "By God it is in me and must go forth of me."

Emerson was giving his time the teaching it stood most in need of. The eighteenth century had been an age of strict logical method and highly systematized views. But its formal analysis and rigid application of rules made it emphasize the mechanical training of faculty, the mechanical aspect even of spiritual activity rather to the neglect of the spiritual essence, the free enthusiasm of the individual. Was it a drama to be written, or an ode, or an epic, there were fixed rules and a traditional procedure for its composition. Was it a question of taste, or morals, there was a code, almost beyond appeal. Was it a question of rights or religious sentiment, there was the

law and theology. And in the Puritan world of New England all that had been systematized into a culture which left the individual less spiritual freedom, than he had had in the culture of the Renaissance or that of the *grand siècle* in France, or in the days of Queen Elizabeth. It was time to break up the hard fabric of that intellectual discipline and give the soul escape from its too formal logic and highly systematized doctrine. Emerson was as exquisitively endowed for that work in his country as Kant and Goethe or Diderot had been for a similar work in theirs. His central doctrine of contact with an Oversoul or universal and eternal mind and his valuation of ecstasy and spiritual instinct as the core of the higher life preserved the belief in a spiritual force permeating the universe which he himself as well as his audience with their heritage of religious sentiment required. And without it most of his teaching, all of it indeed that relates to the higher manifestation of the human spirit, in history, in art, in literature, would have hung loose in the air, been little more than *obiter dicta*, or even idiosyncracy and paradox. Developing in his own way the ideas of Fr. Schlegel and Coleridge he laid perhaps a dangerous stress on the soul as a source of truth altogether separate from the understanding. It proclaimed its own oracles by a warrant of the inward consciousness, "always attended by the emotion of the sublime", by the enthusiasm with which the individual soul mingles with the universal soul. "The vision of genius", he writes, "comes by renouncing the too officious activity of the understanding". No inspired man condescends to evidences, he

would tell a public brought up on Locke and Paley and Butler. His way too, of bringing his high doctrines within the range of common life, where the ordinary man might appropriate them, had something of the profound and energetic simplicity of the great moral teachers, of Christ, of Buddha, of Epictetus. It was deep enough to reach all lives, with a breadth of humanity in it which touched something fundamental in the American soul. It is his greatest, his soundest contribution to world-thought. The poorest might live this grand life. It may come "to the lowly and simple, as insight, as serenity and grandeur", on the condition always that it takes "entire possession" of the individual life. "The growth of intellect is strictly analogous in all individuals".

It was high doctrine, rightly named transcendental, but you see how carefully it is guarded at all points, for the scholar and poet by insistence on adequate preparation, adequate knowledge; for all, by spiritual discipline and an unselfish interest in truth, or as he puts it, in getting "nearer the fact". In the same spirit Emerson taught another doctrine which he also meant to be, rightly used, a pathway to the stars for everyone, but especially for the literary aspirant, as he calls him. For after all, however broadly he spoke, it was the American man of letters he had most in his mind, and it is on American letters that his influence has been greatest. This other doctrine was his view of the independence of the Present in relation to the Past. It was really a corollary from his doctrine of the ecstatic life in which communication with the Oversoul was just as possible, just as good today as

it had ever been in the days of the prophets and apostles. He spoke as if one's life on a Vermont farm or in a remote village could be as rich in essential experience as that of Pericles or of Charles the Fifth. His prose on such a theme has the most seductive accents and a better music than his sharp cut poetic couplets.

> The soul says—Behold his day is here! In the sighing of these woods, in the quiet of these gray fields, in the cool breeze that sings out of these northern mountains; in the workmen, the boys, the maidens you meet;—in the hopes of the morning, the ennui of noon . . . in the disquieting comparisons . . . in the great idea and the puny execution . . . in its sweetness, its greatness, its pain. . . .
>
> Be lord of a day through wisdom and justice and you can put up your history books.

At times he even seems to be disparaging the thought and culture of the Past in general. "Why should meek young men grow up in libraries", he asks, "poring laboriously over the works of Cicero and Locke and Bacon?[1] Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books". (A stylistic hyperbole, this, their works being the fruits of mature experience and research.) "A true man will think, rather that all literature is yet to be written. Poetry has scarce chanted its first song." But here too Emerson's teaching was a healthy reaction against the excessive reliance of New England Puritanism and the academic culture of the day on the authority of the Past, the authority of Hebrew prophets and apostles, of Butlers, Paleys, and Lockes. So he spoke to the American scholar, telling him "to plant himself

[1] The selection of names was pointed at the Harvard studies of that day.

indomitably on his instincts and the huge world will come round to him". "The new man must feel he is new and has not come into the world mortgaged to the opinions and usages of Europe, and Asia, and Egypt".[1] He welcomes the new realism of the time in poetry and art, their new tendencies to deal with "the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life . . . the meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan. . . . Give me insight into today and you may have the antique and the future worlds".

It was the sharp spur applied to the American art and literature of that day. Emerson could see how much it was needed when the most admired poetry of the time, like that of Lydia H. Sigourney, or even Bryant's, was only a half-vital imitation of the sentiment and blank verse of Thomson and Wordsworth, or of the romantic cadences of Campbell. Those were still the days when *Harper's Magazine*, to get something that would really grip its readers, would reprint old classics like Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," or an ode from Gray, in its pages. The call was effective too. Precise origins are hard to find for wide-spread movements, but the call of a great and clear-sighted man like Emerson can hardly be disassociated from the many things that come in its wake. No doubt Lowell, in his around-the-home poetry, Longfellow in his more native strains, Whittier in his new home ballads and lyrics, and even the later racy Americanism of song and story, drew a strengthening impulse at least from Emerson's voice.

The high optimism of Emerson's outlook for the

[1] *Literary Ethics,* an oration delivered at Dartmouth College in 1838.

future of society and literature in America was not unneeded at a time when European and especially British criticism was inclined to look at its crudeness rather than its promise. Edward Everett as editor of the *North American Review* had preceded him here, as Lowell and Whitman were to follow him. Emerson's optimism was not wanting in critical elements but it was not of course as carefully balanced a message as Goethe had given his learned countrymen, already well schooled by Lessings, Kants, Heynes, and Niebuhrs in humanity and its work as a whole; nor could it be as exactly critical as that which Matthew Arnold ventured to give a people that had already touched its summits in world-thought and achievement. It did not lie within his aim to balance nicely between the art and thought of the Past and the prospects that lay in the Present, or examine with scientific coolness the various elements involved in the historical progress of humanity. He belonged to a generation of Americans that was justly proud of its social success, the broader level of equality, comfort, contentment and freedom it had attained; its appreciation of all that was still unclouded by any disturbing sense of the new problems it was bringing with it. Emerson, it is true, recognized at once the value of Carlyle's criticism of modern society in *Sartor Resartus*, he did his best to make it known to his countrymen. But his own message had to be one of stimulating hope and faith. And he was willing to believe that the American energy and enterprise, however roughly self-assertive they might be,

contained within themselves the power of self-purification.

There might be something excessive at times in Emerson's hyperbole and mystical height of vision, but there is never any want of sentences to correct what might be hyperbolical in his style. He bids the American scholar or speculative man "strike out fearlessly for himself," but he says also that he "must take up into himself all the contributions of the past." His "imaginative faculty must be fed with objects immense and eternal." He must at times "embrace solitude as a bride." "Go, cherish your soul" he tells him. He preaches a doctrine of fearless self-expression or of ecstatic speech, but it is at the price of the same preparative discipline or self-forgetful response to a high call by which Spinoza or St. Paul attained it. He has no idea of making the ordinary ego the measure here. "What we commonly call man," he writes in his essay on the Oversoul, "the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect." His faith in man is "a faith proper to man in his integrity." But in fact the corrective sentences were hardly needed. Emerson's personality, so clearly felt by the reader in every sentence, the high form of the speech, the purity of the accent all carried with them a sufficient corrective of what might be extreme or even paradoxical in his utterances. You knew he could not mean anything common or crude. He was all the better fitted to lead his generation out of servitude to intellectual tradition because he was well aware of what they had to keep as

well as what they should leave. He certainly never meant to bring the literary aspirant out of contact with the standards of world-thought which represent the sifted experience of the Past and Present alike. No man drew more support than he from the spiritual heavens which the work of the world-thinkers and world-poets had created. "Life is only worth living," he says, "because of the great men who have lived it." What he was insisting on was that the wisdom of the Past should be verified in one's own experience before being used. "What Plato has thought we may think; what a saint has felt we may feel; what at any time has befallen a man, we can understand." His wise words awoke echoes far beyond American circles; Matthew Arnold quotes the above sentence as one of the inspiring messages which reached him and other young men at Oxford. Emerson's message, in short, though it might seem in parts excessively transcendental and to be emphasizing over much the spiritual independence and the brief experience of the passing generation, was as a whole broadly catholic and soberly rational beneath its garment of oracular and elliptical speech. No one has stated more finely the spiritual unity of the Past and the Present without which there would be no soul in civilization.

> The word by seers or sibyls told,
> In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
> Still floats upon the morning wind,
> Still whispers to the willing mind,
> One accent of the Holy Ghost
> The heedless world hath never lost.[1]

[1] "The Problem."

Then Whitman came. He was in every way, in origin, temperament and training, very different from the refined and educated Bostonians, mostly graduates of Harvard, who gave the tone to American literature. He had lived a life which in any other country would have ended in failure and defeat. He had been a casual and fitful worker as schoolmaster, printer, and journalist, and as assistant to his father who was a carpenter and builder in a small way; often idle and a careless roamer who took root nowhere; but always highly meditative, full of literary projects, with a box full of unpublished manuscripts, essays and poems in his father's house. He knew no language but English, but his reading included some of the great world-classics, evidently in a loose, desultory way, picking up in Homer or Dante or the Vedas, whatever had some affinity to his own way of thinking or suggested to him the wonderful progress of society from the Athens of Pericles and the Florence of Michel Angelo to the social civilization of Broadway and the industrial development and civic freedom of the States in general. He was essentially poetic in temperament, a man of quick, deep, silent sensitivity in all the primary feelings and affections, and with a wide imaginative power of survey, elevated, visionary, and tending at its full stretch towards the mystical horizons, but not condensing well into the clear plastic form of vision which art requires. As a poet he was quite mediocre in the transitional forms of verse he used in his earlier period. His chief literary practice had been in journalistic politics, the slashing, fighting journalism of the small Ameri-

can newspaper of that time, a field in which he was known as an uncompromising slogger, and also as incurably indolent and casual in his office work. An essay of this earlier period on the use of art, however, has every sign of careful and finished work. It is well written in the ordinary rhetorical form of the time, with clear logical development of the theme and a noticeable power of generalizing thought. But in this normal style of composition he was not superior to the scores of able journalists and would never have acquired the literary distinction of the famous Bostonians. He had neither their wit nor their humour, neither their well disciplined gifts of expression nor their critical judgment. He became distinguishable only when he struck out in a style which defied all precedents and standards.

Whitman was a disciple of Emerson in the sense that he took most of the fundamental ideas in Emerson to start from. He took Emerson's high doctrines of ecstatic speech, of the individual's spiritual independence, of the potential equality of soul in every one, and of opportunity in every position, and presented them in a form which cast aside all the conditions and reservations with which Emerson had taught them. The master's doctrine of free ecstatic expression as the right of the purified or rapt soul became in Whitman a licence for the ordinary self, the man on the plane of nature and the animal instincts, to express himself regardlessly. Emerson's call for independence of thought on the part of the American scholar and a new development of art and poetry commensurate with the prospects of the New World, became

in Whitman a fanatical contempt of the best that other nations had produced in the past as unsuitable for the intelligence of a free democratic people. In any case, he declares it is superseded by his poems:

As if such (histories) however complete, were not less complete than my poems;
As if the shreds, the records of nations, could possibly be as lasting as my poems;
As if here were not the amount of all nations, and of all the lives of heroes.[1]

He gradually altered his attitude in his later years, but in the days of his prophesying, when he was the Walt Whitman the public knows best, he spoke as if he expected nothing worth while from humanity outside of "these States." He himself is to outdo everything in his book. He is to "speak the password primeval, to give the sign of democracy" . . . "outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters" . . . "taking the exact dimensions of Jehovah," Zeus, Brahma, Buddha, Allah, etcetera.

Long enough have you dreamed contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes.

"I am mad," he sings, "with devouring extacy to make joyous hymns for the whole earth." And they are to surpass all that has been done in that way.

Who has projected beautiful words through the longest time? By God I will outlive him! I will say such words, they shall stretch through longer time!

. . . . . .

[1] *Leaves of Grass,* Thoughts, Boston Edition, 1860, p. 411. (Omitted, like much else in *The Modern Library Edition,* which has Sandburg's Introduction). *Inclusive Edition,* Doubleday, Page (1924), p. 483.

And who thinks the amplest thoughts? For I will surround those thoughts.[1]

There was something transcendental, no doubt, in Emerson's idea of the equality of "the day" for all, the equality of opportunity for the soul to grow, whatever the circumstances of the individual might be. But it was a truth which all the great religious teachers had sought to realize by means of a spiritual discipline or cult in which the lowest might be taught to participate. Whitman sought it in a bold exaltation of the common instincts and appetites as a level at which all were alike. There was real equality for man on this plane of bare nature. A psychological equality which would bring all to a common ground, that was the philosophic basis of the original Chants. "There is nothing in the universe", he says, "inferior to any other thing". "There is just as much in ugliness as there is in beauty". . . . "To me any judge or any juror is equally criminal with the criminals". What according to the codes is coarse and obscene shall have free expression of itself. "Unscrew the locks from the door" he cries—

. . . . . .

Through me forbidden voices
Voices of sexes and lusts—voices veiled, and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent, by me clarified and transfigured.[2]

It sounded like a doctrine of moral indifferentism on the ground of what was common in the animal nature of man. The judge on the bench and the criminal at the bar might just as well change their places, he says, for any

[1] *Idem.*, p. 188.
[2] *Leaves of Grass*, Boston Edition, 1860, p. 54; 1924 ed., p. 44.

essential difference there is between them. He does not mean that the one would be any better or the other any worse for the change. He is not thinking of the part function and habit have in developing the conscience or the sense of duty: he is thinking of human nature as likely to do better without codes or restraints of any kind. He is looking forward to "the lessening of Venerableness, of the dicta of officers, status, pulpits, schools". Life, he believes, is always pure and sufficient for itself. "*Libertas* and the divine average" is his watchword. He had evidently been greatly influenced by the theory of Fourier which sought to construct social harmony on the free play of the passions and instincts. He has no systematic scheme like Fourier, but his philosophy of life is a similar mixture of philosophic sensualism and pantheism and a mysticism which toyed with the idea of transmigration and recurrence. There is the same attitude of the prophet who is announcing the beginning of a new era for the world which hitherto has been in the irrational and incompetent stage of infancy. Most of Fourier's fundamental ideas are reflected in Whitman's Chants, but he does not, like Fourier, expand in constructive schemes which lie open to practical criticism. His method is that of mystical intensification. His ideal of living combines the principle of ecstatic surrender to instinct with a half-mystical cult of the body. It had of course a very strong expression in his Chants on the sexual instinct. "Sex contains all", he sings, . . . "I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapour—all falls aside . . . books, art, religion, time". He has no apologetic

formula here like that of the pleasure-loving Cyrenaic. "I possess but am not possessed" [1]

To be lost, if it must be so!
To feed the remainder of life, with one hour of fulness and freedom!
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

No wonder that Swinburne was caught, for a time, by such a congenial strain. But, though his Chants of Eros are so profoundly naturalistic that they disdain to notice any spiritualizing elements of romance or the tragic life-devotions of Tristrams and Iseults, there is a kind of philosophic austerity in him here. His enumerations and descriptions are rank with the odours of flesh, but there is nothing of the sentimental prurigo in them which you find in the erotic naturalism of Diderot. There is something exceptional also in his conception of friendship which brought Symonds hurrying over to Camden to see if there was any affinity with old Greek eroticism in the ideas of this remarkable person. Evidently he found little. Whitman was a healthy American with the vigour and healthy vitality of his race, ready to follow nature to her roots in the soil, but with no taste for perversions of her. He too was a transcendentalist in his way, and almost as mystical in his cult of the body as Emerson was in his cult of the mind. But his cult is not aesthetic in the proper sense, for it luxuriates in forbidding details. In one of those grotesque Gargantuan enumerations which are so frequent in his pages he goes over every part of the human body from the strong shoulders and

[1] ἐχω οὐκ ἐχομαι.

manly beard to the "lung sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean" with a rapture which has little or nothing in common with the love of the beautiful. "These are the Soul", he says at the close. As art it is impotence but it is the well known form of mystical fervour. He remarks on the "curious sympathy" one feels in touching "the naked meat of the body", one's own or another person's. He speaks ecstatically of "the scent of the arm-pits, aroma sweeter than prayer". It is the core of animality. He has that general love of kind, half-sensuous, half-social, which you see in young animals and in those in whom the senses are vigorous but unrefined:

To be surrounded by beautiful, curious breathing, laughing flesh is enough,
To pass among them, or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment—what is this then?
I do not ask any more delight—I swim in it as in a sea.[1]

It is his form of the Christian *agape* or love-feast as you may see in his picture of himself and his friend sitting "content and happy" in the noisy bar-room, saying hardly a word.[2] And it is from this point that his ideal of comradeship is elevated into a new basis of society, the only sound one, he thinks. He believes "the main purpose of these States is to found a superb friendship, *exalté*, previously unknown." He will establish "in every city of these States . . . the institution of the dear love of comrades". He sees the workmen of the future walking the streets hand in hand.

[1] *Leaves of Grass,* Enfans d'Adam, Chant 3.
[2] *Leaves of Grass,* Calamus, Chant 29.

There shall from me be a new friendship—It shall be called after my name.

. . . . . .

Affection shall solve every one of the problems of freedom,
Those who love each other shall be invincible,
They shall finally make America completely victorious in my name.[1]

That is the manner in which he combines his social idealism with his cult of the body and the senses. He is eloquent on both extremes, and of course he does not concern himself with the rational construction which is to make them work together. Love will solve all problems. Was it not Emerson who said that the rapt saint or the prophet does not condescend to evidences?

The influence of his social ideals on the general mass of his countrymen is not easily calculable. The poetic form of the *Leaves of Grass* with its tortuous unmusical lines is certainly not that of the poetry which goes to the heart of a people and moulds almost insensibly its character and ideals, like that of Burns or Björnson or Kipling. A few free-love or free-life communities of various kinds may owe their existence in part to the impulse he gave in that direction, but any distinct following of his, even in Chicago, hardly counts in the general body of American citizenship, multitudinous and varied in one sense; but held firmly together by practical interests and aims, and still massively Puritan in feeling and with an Anglo-Saxon respect for moral decorum. He himself has noticed this solid side of the big heterogeneous democracy in his large comprehensive style of characterization.

[1] *Leaves of Grass,* Calamus, Chant. 5.

It is the phrase of prose but it often sweeps the horizon like a flash of light.

Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations,
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast doings of the day and night.
Here is what moves in magnificent masses, carelessly faithful of particulars.
. . . . . .
This union always swarming with blatherers, always calm and impregnable,
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near.

He says little more there perhaps than distinguished Americans had said before him scores of times, but he says it with uncommon vigour of accent in his deliberately dislocated hexameters, which yet try to retain something of the powerful and majestic stride of the classical form. His phrases have the large defining power, the comprehensive inclusiveness of the best prose but not quite the visualizing completeness and the emotional touch of poetry. But, except for some rare lines, that is as near as he comes to poetic form in *Leaves of Grass*. In the one little song, "O Captain! my Captain!", which really reached the heart of his people and is perhaps as universally known amongst them as Eugene Field's "Little Boy Blue", he returns frankly to a traditional form of verse, one of the oldest and simplest rhythms of English poetry, and an entirely normal style of poetic phrase and structure. Devotees even pretend to look down on it for that, but for once a strong personal emotion had brought beauty and truth together in his verse. But his *Drum Taps*, though he preserves some uniformity of movement

there in his rhymed prose, does not rise above a tragic realism even in "Come up from the Fields, Father", and is mostly only funereal in effect, and full of the foetor of the battle-field and the hospital.

Perfume from the battle-field rising, up from the foetor arising.

A gloomy catafalque for a nation's dead warriors; yet you can see in "The Centenarian" and other parts of it, he had in his mind something like what Runeberg did for his people in the way of celebrating their endurance and heroism in a great crisis of their history. Nothing simpler in phrase nor truer in its traits than *Fänrik Ståls Sägner.* In the Swedish poet's accents there is the inward humility and softening of the poet's soul before the tragic grandeur of that national struggle. He does not speak of himself as a Magus with "prophetic voice rising over the carnage" like Whitman

I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you.

but his poems live and will always live, not merely in anthologies and professional criticism, but in the hearts of all who speak the Swedish language, and even far beyond that. It is the poet's guerdon and always will be, and is quite distinct from the interest Continental anarchist and extremist groups show in the Walt Whitman of the original Chants, the only Walt Whitman they care to know.

But there is a sphere in which the influence of Whitman is much more appreciable. Amongst the professional literary class, journalists, critics in the periodicals, the

younger poets and essayists, and amongst the minor artists, all people who are in eager search of a new impulse, a new creed, new themes and attitudes to stimulate invention and bring them into evidence with the public, Whitman's influence in one way or the other was great and is generally quite traceable. It may not have been quite consistent with his exaltation of "the divine average", but he early began to lay stress on the importance of the poet in the building up of the nation. More and more as he began to consider soberly what he called "the morbific elements" in the great democracy, the ignorance, the superstition, etcetera, he tended to throw the whole burden of the future on the emergence of "divine literatuses" as he calls them, to guide democracy into the right path. This became almost the sole purport of his message in his later days, his one cry in the prose articles and essays collected in *Democratic Vistas, and Other Papers*. But he had a poor opinion of the American literature of his day, and saw nothing of real value in it, at a time when Lowell, Hawthorne and Thoreau, Mark Twain and Bret Harte had already done most of their best work. It "does not meet", he says, "the august occasions of this land". The poems and plays and literary magazines in his opinion "strengthen and nourish no one" and "suffice only the lowest level of vacant minds". Even Emerson, to whom he owed so much, is not admitted to be up to the mark as a leader and magus. His pages are declared to be "too perfect, too concentrated, one does not want to be eating nothing but good butter, good sugar, all the time. It is always a *make*, never an uncon-

scious *growth*" . . . "no performance was ever more based on artificial scholarships and decorums at third or fourth removes (he calls it culture) and built up from them". . . . "Suppose these books becoming absorbed — . . . what a well-washed and grammatical, but bloodless and helpless, race we should turn out". It is doubtful to him "if Emerson really knows or feels what Poetry is at its highest". "I see he covertly or plainly likes best superb verbal polish." . . . "in his inmost heart the grandest attribute of God and the Poets is always subordinate to the octaves, conceits, polite kinks, and verbs". He remembers that at one time he had "a touch . . . only on the surface, of Emerson-on-the-brain . . . and addressed him in print as 'Master', and for a month or so thought of him as such".[1] He has "noticed that most young people of eager minds pass through this stage". That is the point of view and the tone he bequeathed to the new school of American criticism.

Whitman's criticism of Emerson has its little bit of truth in it of course, but it is on the whole a strange thing to say of the man who had taught him that "it is pitiful to be an artist when by forbearing to be artists, we might be vessels filled with the Divine overflowings". But you see Whitman's idea of what is alone great in literature is represented by the art you find in *Leaves of Grass*, and by ancient collections of sacred writings like the Vedic hymns and the Upanishads, which he knew only in translations that could not suggest to him their real place in the literary art of a race. Whitman had at first nothing

[1] *Democratic Vistas*, p. 145 (Notes left over).

very explicit in the way of counsel to the literary aspirant. It is all rather implied in his life and example and in the teachings of the *Leaves of Grass*, especially in the earlier Chants before he began to modify his attitude and opinions. Free and fearless expression without a hampering regard for traditional standards, a contented acceptance of the modest material conditions of the scholar or thinker's lot, freedom from the pressure of social conventions, the spiritual independence that leads the life necessary to realize itself, the relief and the inspiration which the poet or artist may find in the world of nature. All that is not so much taught in abstract doctrine, it is the spirit of every line he writes, it is involved in his way of looking at life. Emerson had taught it all, but with implications that kept it within the recognized standards of the spiritual life. In Whitman it became something different. His style and accent were alone sufficient to make it so. They gave Emerson's high doctrines a seductive flavour of Bohemian freedom, of independence of all codes. Emerson had said to the American scholar that he must take himself away from the crowd at times in order to find himself. "Go, cherish the soul" in solitude, he told him. Whitman translates it admirably into the language of the hobo, a hobo of genius, "to loaf and invite my soul". His version, of course, was a greater success than Emerson's. It sank us from attitudes of style, which were native only to the man of Concord, and suggested an atmosphere of contemplative indolence which was fascinating. In short, he made Emerson's teaching part of a naturalistic theory of freedom which took the elements of

discipline and spiritual askesis out of it. He presented it too in the form of revolt and revolution which is naturally attractive to youthful poets and artists, as an attitude of originality, at the same time as he flattered American pride by declaring that this new evolution of poetry and art could be looked for only in the United States, not in the old monarchy-ridden countries of Europe. It is one of the ironies of history that any general literary evolution that took place, came with the Ibsens and Strindbergs of the small Scandinavian nations, the Dostoyevskys, Tolstois and Turgenieffs of despotic Russia, with Turner and Monet, with Ruskin and Carlyle and Browning. The writers there were all great thinkers who grappled firmly and clearly with the fundamental problems of life and art, but they were also masters of style, masters of harmony in presentation and of beauty in expression, without which there can be no great art at least, however the case may stand with prophesying and oracle-making.

It became the vogue in some circles to regard Whitman's large, vague gesture towards freedom of the natural man as pointing the way to some kind of a victory over human fate and destiny. There are of course fine flashes, and not a few of them, in his amorphous compositions, as there are fine rhythms jostling with dislocated ones. A man of literary and contemplative gifts could not well write ten thousand lines of verse without having some memorable things amongst them. But how carefully Burroughs has to search for a few jewels in the way of descriptive phrases to show that Walt is a nature poet,

and how few he finds. How Carl Sandburg turns round and round to find some quotable things with the clear impress of poetic thought or poetic art on them, and what he is constrained to give us as specimens of "massive masterpieces", "massive achievements". "I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me" or "What is a man anyhow? What am I? What are you?" or "I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown". Or he takes refuge in Walt's territory of the inarticulately primitive, as he calls it, "the abysmal, on the borders where time, mystic dimensions, and the Sphinxes of Nowhere ask their riddles", the which are all grand names for the following thoughts, not very abstruse in themselves, it depends how far one realizes them in some distinct vision, and that is just what Walt does not do for us, "Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me, Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there," or "A child said, What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands, How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he. . . . I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord". The other guess is judiciously left out by Sandburg: "I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven". Walt is fond of that kind of profundity. Sandburg is very glad to get hold of a solitary "haunting" rhythm like "Out of the cradle endlessly rocking", or that "most poignantly struck" note in the poem "To a Common Prostitute", "Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you". Yes, it is well felt, that is his natural depth. The sun

shines on Bender the murderer's head, as Hegel reflected. But Sandburg is rather careful if you read him between the lines.[1] His summing up has the wit and resourcefulness that never desert an American. "*Leaves of Grass*", he writes, "is the most wildly keyed solemn oath that America means something and is going somewhere that has ever been written." I have my doubts if that would have quite satisfied the great egocentric, at least before the seventies. Whitman is not readily quotable in detached passages, of course. His effect is culminative, and evasive, because he has much more of the contemplative mystical habit of thought than the shaping imagination of the poet. A mystical habit of thought and a love of abstract sublimities do not readily take a plastic form unless with the help of allegory and symbolism. But as a philosophical thinker he is very undisciplined—he came comparatively late even to Emerson. In ultimate questions he rushes straight out on every side to mystical confines and absolute ideas without consideration of the intermediate relations which are to bind his infinite with his finite or his future with his present. In social questions he founds his ideas not on any study of institutions and conditions as they have worked in human experience, but on mere prophetic assumptions of what civilization is to be in two hundred or three hundred or—in his later days —maybe a thousand years hence,

> . . . outlining what is yet to be,
> I project the history of the future.[2]

[1] Introduction to Whitman's Poems in *The Modern Library.*
[2] *Leaves of Grass,* Inscriptions to a Historian.

But, as the real student of world-thought and history knows, it is not given to man, not to Isaiah, nor Plato, nor Bacon, nor Goethe, to foresee the new sanctions and the new moral cements which the evolution of society will require or may create for itself in the coming generations. The best man does in this way is to project some little extension of his own generation's way of looking at things as John Stuart Mill did in his ideal of Liberal principles and progress. It may be useful and helpful in defining clearly an element in civilization, but nothing is more certain than that it will not include the new social conditions and sanctions of a later age. Pure moral prophecy with its moral criticisms is in fact a good deal safer, but to do any good it must be the expression of a selfless moral will, and Whitman, the Whitman of the original Chants, is a fanatical egocentric. His best ground as a speculative moralist is at the other extreme of philosophic thought. When he drops straight down into the lurking places of the human heart, he says what the wisest have hesitated to say directly, because it can hardly be said directly without seeming to imply an unspiritual and dangerously unsocial view of life. Instincts which reason keeps half chained, the exceptional forms of independence which may reject the normal responsibilities of life, the defiance of social standards which may be involved in "living one's life" fully, the criticism of social conformity and respectability as a form of moral cowardice, all that has its right to expression. And poets and artists have given it expression often enough, but as a rule along with the atmosphere and conditionings which keep it

humanly possible and illumine it as part of the burden of the individual life. That is what makes Dowson's *Cynara* moral after all. Even Browning can teach—

> Let a man contend to the uttermost
> For his life's set prize, be what it will!
>
> The counter our lovers staked was lost
> As surely as if it were lawful coin.

Whitman's naturalism here may have its value as a criticism of the form which social conventionality takes in his country. There is a self-protective instinct in the big heterogeneous American democracy which makes it rather oppressive in its demand for conformity in manners and habits. Forty-nine per cent of it may have leave to smoke or not smoke, drink or not drink, as the remaining fifty-one per cent decide. To wear patched shoes you should hide yourself in the obscure quarters of a big city, or form a community for wearing patched shoes, or doing anything else that is irregular. The British matron of Victorian memory was an easy going creature compared with her American sister of today, who is an imperious Juno dragging a meek but highly ironic little Zeus in her wake. It is only the younger Eve that can beat her off the field when it is a question of short skirts or unchaperoned drives. But the way in which Whitman preached his doctrines of freedom was not likely to do much good amongst the decent people who need it most. "I, Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs. . . . Disorderly, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, breeding. . . . I believe in the flesh and the appetites". That was how he

spoke to them in the 1860 Boston edition of *Leaves of Grass*. It could seem to them little else than an attempt to idealize the crude instincts of the Cave man. To the foolish, it would be the consecration of their folly. It did not alter the matter very much that he declared those instincts to be divine and miraculous:

> Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touched from,
> The scent of these arm-pits, aroma finer than prayer,
> This head more than churches, bibles and all the creeds.
> If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my own body, or any part of it.

They had heard, and they hear still, similar claims, similar ideas of divinity, from most of the illiterate apostles of irregular sects, from Joseph Smith to Benjamin Purnell. But Whitman's mystical naturalism here is really part of a genuine effort to see all things, as Spinoza sought to see them, *ex specie aeternitatis*, from the point of view of the eternal. He is at home with the great metaphysical negatives, infinities and absolutes, the beauty of death, the identity of perfection and imperfection, "What is a man anyhow?" the entelechy of body and soul, the inscrutable nature of reality, the cosmic presence of the One, the contact of the soul at every point with the infinite in emotions and in perceptions, the mystery of the flower in the crannied wall, and "the procession of souls" along these "grand roads of the universe". He lives amongst such ideas, they are the high lights of his intellectual world and supply him with most of his philosophic sentences; "a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times", there is "no object so soft but it

makes a hub for the wheeled universe", "truth is no dictum", "to look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you", "if you would understand me, the nearest gnat is an explanation . . . the maul, the oar, the hand-saw second my words", "*Allons!* from all formulas!" But he lives amongst such ideas without any systematized form of thought or knowledge which could steady him in the use of them. He reaches them by a leap. He loves the mystical absolute which cannot be profitably applied. He uses it to negate the rational. "The earth does not argue". "Why should not a man or woman do as much as the seasons, and effuse as much?" Like our modern mystics in general, he loves all mystery except the mystery that is reason. He can accept casually any mystical possibility, the Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, metempsychosis, or whatever else. But naturally he does not try to find definite formulas for his conception of existence. His great resource is to make himself and his speech its representative, in their unlimited comprehensiveness, their elusiveness, their very contradictions. He is an exalted egoist, with not a little vanity also of the common irritable kind, curiously embedded in a naïve simplicity of character; but in his philosophic sentences his ego, his frequent "I's" and "me's" represent this rich elusive incomprehensibility of nature or the All. He is an Empedocles of the nineteenth century and feels himself inflated with these Divine overflowings beyond the understanding of any. But he has a mystical confidence in the saving power of this oracular message of his, in an indefinite form of effluences and emanations that

will reach the reader in his words just as the voices of nature might do. He does not need to speak clearly or fully. He has only to make the oracular gesture, the oracular enumeration, the mystical reiteration, to set the etheric currents and fluids moving. You can see the disciple of Emerson in all that, bellying out the bold lines of the master's thought into the flamboyant and the gigantesque.

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really am,
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me.
. . . . . .
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them.

So he speaks in the poem of "Walt Whitman", as it was called in the earlier editions of *Leaves of Grass;* in later editions, "Song of Myself". In those last lines you can see the poetic flash that comes to him every now and then in the midst of his prophesyings.

But however extravagant he may be in his theories of history and art, there is something in his moral attitude towards life which is of universal value. His naturalism, his assertion of the right of the natural man to live the life of his instincts involves some kind of discipline of the spirit to make it possible. What he says here is drawn from his own life and comes from an experience which has met the facts fairly. There is a heroic note in the courage with which he faces life's contingency and accident; a high kind of stoicism in his attitude towards fate

and circumstance on the ground that life is always sufficient for itself:

> I do not seek good fortune, I myself am good fortune and
> I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes
> . . . . . .
> No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.[1]

He was "thirty-six and in perfect health" when he wrote that, and also lived an egocentrical life which was really concentrated ambition independent of social and family relations. These meant to him what they meant to Epictetus; things to welcome and things to let go when the time came, as not after all the essential good of life which consists of that which lies within the will. And he combined this with an unconditioned freedom of action which set loose all the force and energy of the individual. When he first promulgated his gospel, his confidence in natural freedom was so entire that he would not consider whether it might not let loose destructive forms of egoism and self-will as well as constructive energies. In later editions of *Leaves of Grass* he inserted lines which admitted perhaps that his book might do as much harm as good, but in the original Chants he rather glorified the idea that it would encourage contempt of rational limits and the general experience of humanity.

Whitman's sense of life is cosmic but it is a feeling for values, to use a phrase of modern theology, which has no rational structure to connect it with the recorded history

[1] "Song of Myself."

and experience of humanity. Its general effect is to destroy for him the value of all rational criteria and to blind him to the significance of all the phenomena that lie between his mystic absolutes and the bare facts of nature. He has no clear idea of the spiritual life of humanity as a whole, as a living whole. What he sees in the Past, for example, what he judges it by, is only its surface of manners and formal institutions, its externals, as Perrault and his following judged Homer by his Olympian mythology. The unity of spiritual life and effort in human history, its wonderful power of preserving and recording itself, and the part it plays in steadying and enlarging the brief limited experience of every passing generation is the one really transcendent thing in human life, but it hardly enters into his valuation of things. After a while indeed he begins to pay empty compliments to the work of the Past as something that served its day. As he gets older his appreciation increases, becomes real. He is forced to take note of the fact that "the chief religions and poetical works" that support the faith and culture of his own day come from the Past, and in some cases from the far-back past. But he can only stand and gaze before such a fact, he tries at times to speak as if it were restricted to religious thought as distinguished from the artistic, literary and moral values, and at other times gives up that restriction as untenable. What! How! "Out of their darkness and ignorance" (that is the way he thinks of the Athens of Sophocles and Phidias, the Rome of Caesar and Vergil and the great epochs of the Past in general) with their "petty environage and limited area",

they could produce works superior to those of this great America with its magnitude, its industrial energy, and all the splendours of modern science behind it. He has no organ by which he can understand it. He can only take refuge from it, partly in prophecy that the "divine literatuses" of the America of the future will certainly make those of the Past obsolete, and partly by declaring that for that end, all the standards of beauty, unity, harmony and logical reason hitherto prevailing in poetry are to be abrogated. "America necessitates for her poetry entirely new standards of measurement".[1] In which case of course the *Leaves of Grass* could count as the new type of poetic art.

You see where he is. The spiritual progress or evolution of human civilization is understood by him in its formal or external aspect only, as it is expressed in the temporary formulas of each generation. It appears to him as a straight line in which each point of light in the long series is practically extinguished on the appearance of the next, as a new mechanical invention or a new business method extinguishes its predecessor. He cannot see the Reason, the Logos in humanity as a living whole which is continually inspiring and controlling the new effort of man to understand and express himself. He cannot see *how* Homer is a living core radiating force still to Goethe for his modern epic, as he did centuries ago to Milton, and even more so, for Goethe takes something deeper than form from the old Greek. He cannot see how Vergil radiates force not only to Dante in the 14th cen-

[1] *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers,* "A Backward Glance."

tury but also to Tennyson in the 19th. In his later years he has his usual empty compliments to Plato and Kant and Hegel, but it is quite evident that he has no real appreciation of the underlying liens that bind the best thought of today to that of the great masters though their formal logic and their formal synthesis may be found inadequate. He had had no training to understand the intellectual universe to which civilized humanity belongs with its fine reticulations of thought and feeling. How an old Greek coin could illumine a theory of art for Winckelmann in one way, and for Ruskin in another way and for Wickhoff in a third way, and how all were living parts of the same human effort to understand and express the life of the spirit was amongst the things for which he had no sense. Theories of art and literature! The reticulations of thought! He did not need to know or examine their evolution. He shelved them all, by a prophecy of what was to be two centuries hence or five centuries hence. Because the United States was in his eyes a bigger and livelier state than had ever before existed, he thought the reticulation was to be broken and the method of evolution was to become in some way different. If you want to see what he really thought about these matters, you can read his "Song of the Exposition", one of the later additions to the *Leaves of Grass*. There you can see the superficial vision he has of the human record, a vision hopelessly limited to the current watchwords of his parish based almost entirely on materialistic values and magnitudes. He cannot separate the life of the spirit or the life of art from the temporary conventions through

which they unfold themselves in every age. Calliope and Clio are dead, he tells us, "ended is that primitive call of the Muses". . . . "Jerusalem is extinct." There is a "To Let" on Parnassus, and the walls of your German, French, Spanish, and Italian "collections". For the Muse is emigrating to her new American palace, . . . the palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet, Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping. He calls for new superb themes for poetry and art which shall encourage the idea of "manual work for each and all":

. . . to plough, hoe, dig,
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetable, flowers.
. . . . . .
To use the hammer and the saw (rip, or cross-cut),
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,
To work as a tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the washing, cooking, cleaning,

It is the usual tedious style of enumeration, and it is followed by the usual auctioneer's appraising catalogue of America's material wealth and resources, the cotton-spinning machines, the ore-crushing machines, the Hoe printing-presses, "the limitless crops, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice, hemp, hops", "the grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy orchards" "the barns all filled, and the endless freight train".

The incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal, thy gold and silver,
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines,
All thine, O sacred Union!
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines.

Also of course,

> the People themselves,
> Lifted, illumined, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

A thousand oxen, or ten thousand times ten thousand, feeding peacefully as one in their stalls, for Walt takes no notice of their persistent goring of each other over the fodder, it was not so bad in his day.

As to the migration of the Muse from Europe to her new palace in America, one who knew much about world-literature would hardly have cared to make that prophecy just at the time when Turgenieff and Tolstoi, Victor Hugo and Wagner, Ibsen and Björnson and the great Victorians like Tennyson and Carlyle, Browning and Ruskin, were in the field, all of them great examples of the power of genius to renew the forms and the spirit of literature. It was out of the proletarian "darkness" of Russia and the "limited area" of Norway and Sweden that the great new forms of novel and drama and saga were to come. The American supremacy may realize itself sometime, but there are few signs yet that material prosperity and business energy are creating in America the atmosphere in which great art rises naturally into life. And perhaps Whitman's influence in relaxing the standards of literary form has co-operated with the over-development of market and business instincts to postpone that migration of the Muse.

Far-off predictions of the social future are really beyond fruitful discussion. What may come of social life under new conditions and new sanctions is beyond conjecture. But it is different with the question of Art

and Poetry and Literature as art. Those depend on a sense of what is beautiful, harmonious, and rational which does not vary essentially in the history of civilization. It may bring ever new materials within its scope, but the sense of a beautiful curve is the same now as it was in the time of Phidias. Conventional variants of the grotesque, or the monstrous, or the fantastic, do not affect the fundamental fact. In the plainest forms of literature, reason will always make clearness, order, sequence, the standard, and to say that poetry is the highest form of literature means that these qualities are there in a higher, if a freer form. Beauty of expression is the highest form of that appeal which clearness makes to the mind, and harmonious structure or organization only means that the facts have been thoroughly mastered and marshalled. The shaping power of imagination with which the poet is gifted is only a power of vision which sees the true form of life amidst the confusing multiplicity of the phenomena and presents it with superior clearness or vividness. The quality of his art is always the guarantee of the quality of his vision. Outside of that there may be a doubtful field of oracular and mystical speech, but its relation to literary art is as casual and intermittent as its relation to the logic of philosophical thought and the discoveries of science is. Whitman was at first a mere barbarian in his attitude towards art. In this respect he was an exaggeration of what was weak in Emerson just as he was an exaggeration of what was strong. There is a philosophic abstractness in Emerson which did not do full justice to the *thought* that is im-

plicit in art. He considered a good translation of a foreign classic was as serviceable as the original; he could take out of it all *he wanted*. And he shuffled about the paragraphs in his orations as if their place in the whole did not matter very much. Neither did it in one who leaped so nimbly along the high peaks of thought. His only art is the gem-like cut of his phrase. Whitman had a comprehensive vision of the life he saw about him and a mind richly stored with its natural features. His vigorous memory held details firmly, in a distinct visualizing way. His heart warms over the detail and his imagination kindles at the spectacle of the whole; but it is with a half mystical rather than with a poetic flame, it brings with it little of the shaping power of the poet, little of the power of beautiful expression, or of musical movement. All that is very second rate in him, so second rate he feels, that he wisely makes up his mind to erase everything in his new poem that even suggests an effort in those directions. You can see what his gift is at its best in his treatment of such a definite commonplace poetic theme as the old-time sea-fight in the "Song of Myself" or, in his highest lyrical effort, the song of the two sea-birds from Alabama, where the poignant mystical cries seek to pierce the sky with reiterations in the manner of the oldest Oriental song in the "Canticle of Love". What models or moulds of art he had lay mainly in prose translations of old Hebrew poetry in which the passion of prophecy and the sublimity of emotion overpowered the plastic imagination.

He came back from a long reporting tour in the South

with accumulated masses of notes, new and old, of everything he had seen, to be worked out into the usual forms of articles and poems. But he was never a steady worker except perhaps at that amorphous growth which he named with genial instinct *Leaves of Grass*. His heart was flaming irritatedly between the consciousness of poetic or prophetic vision and the lack of a shaping faculty that corresponded to it. No doubt it was after much inward wrestling he came to the conclusion that the best way was to unburden himself of the whole mass, memoranda, impressions, reflections, catalogues, drafts of poems, just as they stood in his note-books, or nearly so. A great deal of the *Leaves of Grass* reads just like the short-hand notes of a poet or traveller to be extended and developed later:

California life—the miner, bearded, dressed in his rude costume—
the stanch California friendship—
the sweet air—the grapes one in passing meets, solitary,
just aside the horse-path

or

The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark—the supper-fires and the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,
Thirty or forty great wagons—the mules, cattle, horses feeding from troughs,
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore trees—the flames—also the black smoke from the pitch-pine, curling and roving.

What was a man with a poetic sense of life, a flaming heart and a head bursting with ideas to do, if his artistic power of organization was poor, and his command of poetic expression, as it was then understood, only second rate. Nothing but to damn Vergilian phrase and music

and all that sort of thing, and let his amorphous collections loose on the world with a startling Rabelaisian moral *Fais que voudras* written all over them. Nothing else could serve such a venture but a defiance of all established codes social and literary. It is the incalculable feat of an undisciplined genius who felt his message as a burden too vast to be shaped into the clear form of art; the explosion, one might say, of an intense personality, not the harmonious unfolding of a poet. You can read his own sense of what happened in his "Song of Myself":

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,
Walt, you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?
Come now, I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articulation,
Do you not know, O speech, how the buds beneath you are folded?
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,
The dirt receding before my prophetical screams . . .

He has characterized correctly there what was arresting in the style of the Chants—the prophetical scream. He is a preacher with a message to deliver and determined to overcome his inarticulacy by lowering the standard and heightening his pitch. But behind his message there was an immense fact which gave it most of the significance it had for its time. Behind his defiance of all the old and established codes there was the ideal of the United States as it blazed before the eyes of Europe in 1850. His vision of a new society founded on love and comradeship alone and giving the unfettered freedom of nature to the individual added little or nothing to the dreams of the French revolutionaries or the poetic visions of Shelley.

But he made this vision identical with the future of the United States which seemed to him, when he first wrote, in a fair way to realize it. He had come to regard himself in this respect, as the sole revealer to the nation of its destiny. He speaks of the eminent Americans, Emerson, Beecher, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, and others who assembled to welcome Froude on his visit to the States as men who were incapable either "singly or together" of comprehending the significance of the American nation. "It cannot," he writes, "be said of any or all of them that they can speak for their nation". And he is obviously contrasting Froude's work with his own as a writer when he says that with all his gifts as a writer it is not within his compass to express "the movements of a nation, *The voiceless purpose of a people which cannot put its own thoughts into words, yet acts upon them in each successive generation*".[1] The italics are his own. It was another rather venomous stroke at Emerson. Whitman's vanity is of a very naïve kind, like everything else in him, yet he must have felt that Emerson's claims to have voiced the promise of American civilization were certainly prior to his own and, as far as its spiritual development at least is concerned, of a higher order. But that is just what he is trying to annul. He speaks for the time being and because it suits him as if the representative thought and constructive forces of a nation lay amongst the inconscient masses only.

What Whitman stands for as the apostle of a new gospel is to be found in the original Chants of the *Leaves of*

[1] *Democratic Vistas,* "Our Eminent Visitors."

Grass. Whatever is new or original in his message, whatever gave him individuality as a teacher, is there. But the voice of the original Chants is one thing, and the voice of the later editions of the *Leaves of Grass* with the changes, modifications, and palinodes he introduced is another thing; and the voice of Walt Whitman, the prose writer, explaining his previous utterances, gliding away apologetically from their extravagance and substituting the cooler judgment and reflection of later years is a third thing, which is specifically distinct in tone and attitude from the other two. The three together constitute such a mass of divergent, differently shaded and contradictory views that in the end it would be difficult to say what Whitman stood for in the way of doctrine or opinion that had anything novel about it. The only thing left him would be his conviction that America, as Sandburg says, means something and is going somewhere and will get there sometime. For further information await the 30th century.

He began early to revise the one-sided emphasis of his first utterances. The exaltation of the physical life was the distinctive feature of the original Chants. It was the psychological basis of his views about equality and freedom, that all men were of equal worth, and that the natural man had a right to the unfettered expression of himself. It was the special note of Walt Whitman as he first showed himself to the public, "beating the gong of revolt", proclaiming himself "disorderly, fleshy", etcetera, contemptuous of laws, codes and conventions, picking out as his "dearest friend" "some low person, lawless rude

and illiterate". But in a later addition to his book he announces in a little chant of four lines that he has changed his opinion and now sets the standard in mental refinement, not in what he used to call the Body-Soul:

I have said many times that materials and the soul are great,
and that all depends on physique;
Now I reverse what I said, and affirm that all depends on the
aesthetic or intellectual,
And that criticism is great—and that refinement is greatest of all;
And I affirm now that the mind governs—and that all depends on
the mind.[1]

And as he comes to regard Arts and Letters and literary culture (he accepts the word now) as a prime necessity and indeed the governing element in the development of Democracy, he begins to reconsider his opinions as to the value of outside culture, of world-thought and the records of the Past. He had occasionally paid all that some formal compliments even in the early Chants, as having served its time. The prophets, poets, artists, and thinkers of the Past had undoubtedly contributed to make humanity what it is, but their messages, their revelations, were no longer living. He had waved them away as unfitted for the New World and the Present. They were of but the teachings of "cautious old hucksters" or "the ashes of teachers, artists, moralists, learned and polite persons". He had asked, "Which is the theory or book that for our purposes is not diseased?" But he gradually becomes a highly embarrassed apologist of his original views in this respect, modifying them in some cases, revising them in others, blowing hot and cold by turns in

[1] *Leaves of Grass*, Boston Edition 1860, p. 421.

his endeavours to keep something of his original attitude and yet adjust himself to what he now sees to be the facts, but always shifting his position a little nearer to what you might call the normal view, the point of view of world-thought and culture. I cannot follow here all the rather amusing yet interesting changes and shadings of his views. You can read most of them in the collection of his prose writings in *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers*. In the earlier of them written about 1870 you will find his middle position. "The divine literatus", the great poet (of an "archetypal poem") has become so important in his eyes for America that he seeks evidence of his eternal influence in the great examples from the Past. Jerusalem is not extinct, nor Calliope and Clio, as in the "Song of the Exposition". "Immortal Juno lives, and Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems"; Homer and the Bible of course; he has got as far as that immortal refrain. Still there are large reserves. "The great poems"; he tells us "Shakespeare included, are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of democracy" they "had their birth in courts . . . all smells of princes' favours".[1] "Shakespeare is incarnated uncompromising feudalism in literature".[2] In the article "My Book and I", the case for admission of old classics to the canon is getting much stronger, not alone for archetypal works, but even feudalism's epics and ballads. "The New World," he writes, "receives with joy the poems of the antique, with European feudalism's rich fund of epics, plays, ballads, seeks not in the least to

[1] *Democratic Vistas*, p. 34. [2] *Notes Left Over.*

deaden or displace those voices from our present time and area", if he were asked to name the most precious bequest to American civilization he is not sure but he "would name those old and less old songs ferried hither from east and west". But yet the *advocatus diaboli* has a sharp question to put on the other side: "is there one (of these great poems) that is consistent with these United States or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and an insult to democracy?" Shakespeare is "the loftiest of the singers life has yet given voice to", his plays are "never-to-be-excelled poetic bequests" and "precious heirlooms for America", but "he too belongs essentially to the buried past; the conditions, standards, politics", etcetera, he depicts "never existed at all in the Western hemisphere".[1] It is only after he has read his friend William O'Connor's ingenious article suggesting that Shakespeare's plays are designed as exposures of the crimes and follies of feudal dynasties and nobles that he finds he can welcome them without reservation as constituting a kind of preparation for "the political theory" which America has come on earth to establish".[2]

As his judgment goes on maturing and his reading enlarges, his protest against the influence of outside literature comes to mean less and less and ultimately practically disappears. You can see he is glad to get rid of it wherever he decently can. In a note to the *Democratic Vistas* which dates from the Eighties, he gives an absolutely clean bill of health to metaphysical and spiritual

[1] My Book and I," p. 92. [2] "Shakespeare's Historical Plays."

works such as the Indian Vedas, the Old Testament, the Koran, the Edda, Plato's writings "and so on towards our own day, to Swedenborg, and to the invaluable contributions of Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel". "Here at least", he writes, "of whatever race or era, we stand on common ground". If he includes Plato's or Hegel's idea of the relation of the state to the individual, he must have made a wonderful right-about-face in his ideal of individual freedom, but it is more likely that what he has in mind is the *Phaedo* with the doctrines of immortality and reminiscence possibly something of the *Symposium*, with which Symonds would no doubt drench him, and Hegel's popular History of Philosophy. Walt has a very easy way of speaking of what he has read and studied.

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine having studied long
I seem reminiscent today those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see.
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend.

But I think few who have examined Whitman's life and writings with any care will suspect him of having spent much time on the precise forms of philosophic reasoning and logic. Obviously what he liked was a casual intuitive form of thinking which did not require much coordination. To hear a learned astronomer lecturing on the

stars with his charts and calculations, made him, as he tells us, "tired and sick". He glides out of the room to "look up in perfect silence at the stars".[1] You can hardly imagine him tackling seriously the long list of sages and philosophers he speaks of, except as they appear in an Encyclopaedia. His real creed was mystic enough to encourage prophesying "without other preparation than life gives"—

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,
All merges towards the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth,
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print cannot touch.

His lists of sages "studied and stated" are a little like his vision of what he sees and hears in the *Salut au Monde*. He sees the steppes of Asia and the high-lands of Abyssinia, the mummy pits of Memphis, the Brazilian *vaquero* and the *Wacho* crossing the plains in pursuit of wild cattle, the sharp-eyed Samoyed and the Finn, the seal seeker in his boat, poisoning his lance, the caravans of Muscat and Medina toiling onward, etcetera, etcetera, he is a real Parisian, a habitant of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople, Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne, etcetera, etcetera. It is an excellent synopsis of some Illustrated History of the World or Picturesque Tours by eminent persons. All Walt does is to add a few mystic absolutes "Each of us is inevitable, each of us limitless," etcetera, and to subscribe himself at the end in his usual manner:

[1] "By the Roadside."

> Toward all
> I raise high the perpendicular hand—I make the signal,
> To remain after me in sight forever,
> For all the haunts and homes of men.

Simple, naïve, cunning, sublimely daring, preposterous Walt!

It is difficult to find opinions and judgments in Whitman which he has not at some time modified greatly or contradicted, either explicitly or implicitly, but as regards literature it is evident amongst all his divergent utterances that he eventually by gradual stages reached the normal point of view of world-culture. Indeed he even begins to discover in the poetry of both old feudal Europe and modern Europe a depth of universal appeal which is, he thinks, wanting in America's productions. In what is evidently a fairly late article in *Notes Left Over*, he asks, "Where is America's art-rendering to compare with such 'immortal monuments' as the epics of India, the Homeric Canticles, the *Cid Campeador*, the *Inferno*, Shakespeare's dramas of the passions and of the feudal lords, Burns' songs, Goethe's in Germany, Tennyson's poems in England, Victor Hugo's in France, and many more, the widely various yet integral signs or land-marks in certain respects the highest set up by the human mind and soul . . . ?"

That may be another dig at Emerson and Bostonian circles, "genteel little creatures" with their 'pistareen paste-pot-work' and their complacent vanity of scientism and literature." So he writes of them; there are plenty of signs that Walt's institution of "the dear love of com-

rades" was personally more easily extended to bus conductors and Battery Point boatmen than to eminent contemporary writers of the States.

In 1887 when Tennyson's sequel to "Locksley Hall" appeared with its scathing passages on modern Radicalism, Whitman has got so far as to give it a hearty welcome, and tells the American democracy it is a signal instance of its luck that it should have such teachers as Carlyle and Tennyson to admonish it with their deep-sounding and high-soaring voices. The trend of our times, he writes, "needs such voices almost more than any". His praise of Carlyle is another right-about-face from the judgment of his earlier days. It is obviously a counter-blast to Lowell's essay on Carlyle in *My Study Windows* which had dealt rather acidly with what Lowell thought to be Carlyle's lack of artistic sense of form, rhythm and proportion, his want of plastic imagination, his taste for the amorphous and eccentric and his advertising "his social panaceas" as the only genuine. Lowell's article was a very ill-judged criticism of Carlyle, who was a great artist, but it was a very good criticism of Whitman and sure to be understood as such. In this article on Tennyson Whitman even comes very near admitting that his idea of "breaking down the barrier of form between prose and poetry" [1] has been a mistake.

To me Tennyson shows more than any poet I know (perhaps has been a warning to me) how much there is in finest verbalism. There is such a latent charm in mere words, cunning collocutions, and in the voice ringing them which he has caught and brought

[1] *Notes Left Over,* "Ventures on an Old Theme."

out, beyond all others—as in the line, "And hollow, hollow, hollow, all delight".

That paragraph testifies exactly to Whitman's utmost capacity for appreciating verse. But it is a great deal for the poet of the original Chants to say. In his opinion, *The Idylls of the King*, all of them, are Tennyson's "very best work" . . . "though indeed we could spare nothing of Tennyson". He wants him to realize that here is a great and ardent nation that absorbs his songs, "he has entered into the formative influences of character here, not only in the Atlantic cities, but inland and far West . . . in farmer's house and miner's cabin."

The Index Expurgatorius, we see, has at last completely disappeared. Even Quests of the Holy Grail, Arthur and his knights and Europe's helmeted warriors are once more in order. There is some greatness in these palinodes. There are inconsistencies in Whitman which are very human, naïve vanities,—I have noticed very few of them, and there are inconsistencies which are those of the superman, the mystic, the egocentric. He speaks from so many different planes of thought without any attempt to harmonize or co-ordinate his utterances. In the Chants he is sometimes the mystic and visionary to whom the temporary conditions of the time are of small moment in comparison with his prophetic vision of what is to come; sometimes the poet to whom the blade of grass or the sound of the sea says more than the Book of Wisdom; sometimes the preacher of a philosophical naturalism for whom the sensual emotions and appetites of the average man are the real standard of life, all the rest being mere

embroidery; sometimes the priest of a half-religious, half-literary culture who considers all progress as dependent on the rise of great "literatuses" to enlighten and inspire the masses. Sometimes he is the extreme chauvinist who sees in the United States the only hope of social progress and of a renaissance in arts and letters, and at other times he is the cosmopolite on the basis of a naturalism which accepts China, Teutonia, Italy, and Mongolia as equally valid in the great scheme of nature. He simply "effuses" from any of these points of view he may be taking at the moment. He is well aware of his inconsistencies, his self-contradictions, the fundamental antinomies running all through his writings. His only defence is to say repeatedly to his reader: "You need not think to judge me, Walt Whitman, by these written words, I escape you. . . . I am untranslatable. . . . I myself make the only growth by which I can be appreciated; let no one try to interpret me; I swear I have left the best unsaid; this book is not to be judged as a literary performance", and so forth. It was Walt's naïve way of defying criticism and leaving his reader to make the synthesis he did not and could not make himself.

Only in his prose writings does he make some attempt to survey his work, the *Leaves of Grass*, as a whole, to explain some of its peculiar features, and to add his modifications and palinodes. The realistic atmosphere of prose speech, critical prose, obliges him to take into account many things which the prophetic chant had passed over lightly. The Civil War did not cast any shade on his ideal of the American democracy. He was not himself a

combatant, but the fortitude and patience which the common soldier showed in the hospitals rather helped to maintain his ideal. He thinks it was unique in history, and says it is "the plentifully-supplied last-needed proof of democracy, in its possibilities". "Never feudal nor Greek nor Roman breed yet rivalled it". But at the same time he has begun to look more critically at social conditions in the States and of course he finds as little there as anywhere else to support his vision of a community nearing a stage in which the individual could be a law unto himself and police and statutes superfluous. "Society", he writes, "in these States is cankered, crude, superstitious, and rotten" both in its political and its private aspect. "The moral conscience is either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled" . . . "The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. . . . In business (this all-devouring modern word, business), the one sole object is by any means, pecuniary gain. . . . The official services of America, national, state, and municipal . . . except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption . . . and the judiciary is tainted." "I say", he concludes, "that our New World democracy . . . is so far an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and aesthetic results".[1] With a more austere reasoner the conclusion might have been to condemn entirely a social system which was producing such results. But Whitman is an American with an optimistic faith in his country born of love and supported by

[1] *Democratic Vistas*, p. 13.

the magnificent display of energy and enterprise which he sees surrounding him. He rallies after a while and falls back on Emerson's doctrine that energy and enterprise are convertible into virtue. He even comes to accept as a kind of model "the practical, worldly, money-making, even materialistic character". "I perceive clearly", he writes, "that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States are parts of amelioration and progress indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand". In this way Whitman came finally to reconcile himself with society's code and disclaim the attitude of revolt characteristic of the original Chants. Coercive law is now found to be necessary for the American democracy with its "morbific elements", its "vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit, the uncouth, the incapable, and the very low and poor". The "condition of authoritative tutelage must continue". These changes are reflected in the later editions of the *Leaves of Grass*. He alters and expunges many lines which encourage disrespect for law and the social system, and adds others which represent his later opinions. Of course it was impossible to transform that book altogether; neither did he altogether wish to do so. But in his prose writings you can see the distance which separates the prophet of the original Chants from the man of more mature experience. The illiterate and the rowdy, the convict and the pariah whom he once took to his heart, because the "sun does not exclude" them, are now decisively rejected. Even the simply poor he now regards with austere disapproval because

they have not succeeded in finding a comfortable place in this industrial system which he has pronounced so depraved. He writes as sagely as a New York banker on the safety there is for society in the increase of property owners, the "vast, intertwining reticulation of wealth". "My theory", he says, "includes riches and the getting of riches" . . . "democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business. She asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres, and with cash in the bank—and with some cravings for literature too".[1] Sound enough, all of it, from the economist's point of view, but a long way from the voice of him who came once as the apostle "of the rights of them the others are down upon",—"of the diseased and despairing, and of thieves and dwarfs", of the "drudge of the cotton-fields and the cleaner of privies",

> On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
> And in my soul I swear, I will never deny him.[2]

That was the new evangel which was to "unscrew the locks from the doors", but now the Evangelist is "promulging" views as old and conservative as those of Pindar and Theognis about wealth and property.

Whitman's patriotic faith is a harmonizing element amongst his inconsistencies and incoherencies. Otherwise his intellectual result would be dissonant and confusing, that is, if the popular idea of him took any heed of the anomalies in his work. But most take only what they like

[1] *Democratic Vistas,* p. 29.
[2] *Leaves of Grass.* Boston Edition, 1860, pp. 55 and 85.

in him and shut their eyes to the rest. To the new schools of poetry he is the inaugurator of a versification which dispenses with metrical science; to others he is the prophet of a new American civilization, a little idealistic it may be but on the whole characterizing what it had already achieved in a more striking way than had yet been done and suggesting the promise of something greater to come. To others again of Communistic sympathies his first Chants with their frank naturalism and ethics of revolt are the only gospel, and his withdrawals and recantations things to be overlooked. In that early period Whitman is much more the prophet of Sovietism than of American civilization as we see it, though he had too much American humanity to accept the Soviet law of blood and suppression as a civil condition. But some who do not put much value on his theories and prognostications may still love the poet and mystic.

With all his inconsistencies he is one of those outstanding types of life and thought which are like decisive experiments in the world's laboratory. There is illumination in that uncompromising form of expression we have in a Whitman, or a Nietzsche, or a Shelley, even if it does not show the place of things in a whole like the steady light that shines from a Kant, a Goethe, or a Wordsworth.

II

NEW SYSTEMS OF VERSE: WHITMAN AND PAUL CLAUDEL

WHITMAN'S influence on versification is important, even outside of American literature. But like his work in general it is a vague effort to emancipate without much method in its procedure; there is the germ of a theory of free-verse in it, but little that would suggest any principles of organization. At first, in the *Leaves of Grass*, his ideal was that of the prophet or magus who might mingle all kinds of rhythm together from loosely measured poetic cadences to plain prose as the spirit moved him. It presented itself simply as a form of composition opposed to the artificiality of metrical measurement, and for a generation or so had little general influence on poetry in the States. Carman and the American poets who began to write in the eighties and nineties kept to the traditional metrical forms. Hovey, it is true, who was an admirer of Whitman and a free experimenter, has verses now and then with the unmistakable accent of Walt:

> I said in my heart, I am sick of four walls and a ceiling.
> I have need of the sky.
> I have business with the grass.

But his rhythmical movement maintains more uniformity than Whitman's and its poetic cadence is more defined. In general the type of free-verse he uses is more like that of W. E. Henley. It was not until new influences from the outside, especially the attempts of the French Symbolists to establish a clear type of free-verse, began to cooperate with it, that Whitman's influence on versification became broad enough to create an American school. There was no structural type in the *Leaves of Grass*. At one time it might be plain prose with as little emotional rhythm in it as the enumerations in an auctioneer's catalogue, at another it was a kind of canticle, which carried with it reminiscences of various exalted or ceremonious forms of prose, sometimes of the litanies of the church, sometimes of that poetic prose by which the English translators of the Bible sought to render the sublime Hebrew poetry of Isaiah and the Psalter, sometimes, I think, of the speech and rhythm (coming to him via Walter Scott's novels) of the Cameronian or the Covenanter in the days when Israel fled to the moorlands. Yet a certain type of rhythm tended to assert itself as characteristic. When it rose into anything like measured poetic cadences the movement was often that of a rough dactylic hexameter—easily convertible into anapaestic—a movement which is often also the basis of his later poems on the war;

Long have you timidly waded, holding a plank by the shore,
Now I will you to be a strong swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout
and laughingly dash with your hair.

It is often a wild overgrowth, a true but half-savage descendant of that prophetic speech which he knew in English translations of the Scriptures; you recognize constantly the parallelisms and reiterations of the Hebrew prophet:

I know I am deathless
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass.
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlecue cut with a burnt stick at night.

or—

Before I was born out of my mother, generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid—nothing could overlay it.

His audacious announcements and promulgations only need "Thus saith the Lord" before them to be the reverent language of Isaiah and Ezekiel: "I will make cities and civilizations defer to me.. . . I speak the pass-word primeval—I give the sign of democracy". He has the sublime assurances that his word shall not pass away, and sitting there a comparatively young loafer on the beach of Coney Island he announces that he is creating a new heaven and a new earth. Sometimes it is the rhythm of the church comminations that is sounding in his ear, sometimes the sarcastic interrogations of the Hebrew prophet, sometimes the sayings of Jesus whom he thinks he understands better than any ("I understand you . . . O my comrade"). That is, it is the accent of the orator, the teacher, the prophet; the rhythm is that of an oracular or didactic utterance which may at times rise into a sublimity akin to the beauty of poetic expression. In the poet, the form and content of his vision are in perfect

unity and his style reflects this clear harmony. But the prophet and mystic are struggling with more than they can find words for and make their message oracular by excessive reiteration and accumulation and a despairing violence of language. Whitman's language is the language of the mystic religious consciousness with its turbid reiteration and emphasis. He claims the freedom of Nature—that terribly abused name—for all his cryptic or confused utterances:

Let others finish specimens—I never finish specimens,
I shower them by exhaustless laws, as nature does, fresh and modern continually.

That the mind of man is a loosely representative thing capable of incoherencies, lawless monstrosities, madness, is a truth he will not recognize in those early days of his prophesying. He regards Nature as responsible for his incoherencies and contradictions, as if Nature grew dahlias and daisies on the same stem.

Of course a man with Whitman's literary gifts and large range of vision is not likely to write hundreds of pages without producing many striking and powerful passages. That description of his beloved States, for example, in "Chant Democratic" may not have the fine organization which a poet like Goethe or Browning would have given it but it has true and powerful strokes, and its metaphor occasionally sweeps the horizon like a flash of light:

Here is not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations,
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast doings of the day and night

Here is what moves in magnificent masses, carelessly faithful of particulars

. . . . . .

This Union, always swarming with blatherers, always calm and impregnable
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near.

. . . . . .

. . . the gait they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors

. . . . . .

The picturesque looseness of their carriage. . . .

In the poems which he wrote after the war he often uses a type of free-verse which maintains a certain uniformity in its movement and recurrent poetic cadences. In "Spirit Whose Work is Done" or "Ashes of Soldiers" you can see amidst all the rough variations the hidden basic movement is Longfellow's dactylic hexameter. It is broken and dislocated almost beyond recognition, cut short or lengthened at will, mingled at times with jets of high lyrical rhythm or with sentences in pure prose, or the intoned style of the Common Prayer Book, but the basic movement on the whole asserts its control. Generally, if the movement is clear in one line, it is deliberately stumped in the next to avoid the effect of regularized measure. The following from "Spirit Whose Work is Done" begins with a high rhythm from the old Romantic ode:

Spirit whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours!
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts (yet onward ever unfaltering pressing)

Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—electric spirit,
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last, reverberates round me,
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the battles,
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their shoulders, . . .

You see the almost unvarying cadence of the dactylic hexameter at the close of every line there. It is the power of genuine poetic emotion constraining him, just as in "Captain My Captain," to seek a pure poetic cadence as its garment. In these later poems he is less occupied with the philosophic theory and propaganda which overstrain his thought and language in the original *Leaves of Grass*, and is more of the pure poet. There is often a murmuring music in his verse that seems to come longingly near for a moment to old Apolline melody, then slips away again as if it had no right there. Even if his style is often still oracular, it is not that of a mystical imagination haunting the shores of the unconceivable and trying to say what is unsayable except in a nonrational language, or what at any rate had not been given to him to say. He has a way of dealing with grand universals, Time, Death, Life, Nature, Spirit, etcetera, which gives them a mystical ecstatic projection into the infinite:

Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

There is reason in it, we all know, of a transcendental kind. Death is the great Musagetes, said Schleiermacher. Life without death would be an immortal ennui; without

pathos. And the old faith, *Mors janua vitae*, may be counting with him too in some new mystical form. He has a strongly sensuous way of apprehending such universals and ultimates, not at all the philosophical way which relates them as ideas to experience, nor the ordinary way which relates them as facts to life, he sees them as mystical independent blocks in the ocean of being, with contours that are almost physical. When he is not gripping hard the sensuous nature in things, he is exalting them mystically; there is little between the two his poetic imagination can use. Of course human nature does not work with the precise simplicity of a machine. In that "Death Carol" of his, there are touches of the old romantic beauty of associations which he does not always banish from his style, just as he does not altogether banish the old romantic rhythm; the "night in silence under many a star", the "ocean shore and the husky whispering wave". But on the whole reason speaks in it with a mystical inflation of the voice which one feels is too deliberately, too egotistically willed: "Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome? Then I chant it for thee. . . ."

Whitman is the first of a new race of poets who in an endeavor to enlarge the imaginative domain of poetry would change its standards and methods radically. He is perhaps the greatest of them in the general significance of his work, though neither his art nor his thought have the scientific direction and control you find in the work of the French modernists who came after him. The day of sub-conscious psychology, of the mystical Re-

vival, and of metaphysical affiliations of thought that can make Sirius exchange spiritual courtesies with the fly on the wall, had not arrived. Both Rimbaud and Mallarmé knew English literature and had no doubt made their notes on such phenomena as Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Browning's *Sordello*. But the French development is being carried on with a much more critical knowledge of literature than Whitman possessed, and with so much logic even in its excesses that it is at present the standard-bearer in these new experiments.

Certain types of free-verse have been established but the most successful retain like the verse of Régnier and Verhaeren some formal metre, the old Alexandrine or octosyllabic verse, as their basis movement, and are only great increases in liberty of variation. In English poetry where there was much greater metrical freedom there was no call for revolt, but W. E. Henley was singularly successful in his free-verse. But a clear principle of organization which should define the character and fix the status of a free poetic speech distinct alike from systematized verse and from ordinary prose had not emerged. There has been much fantastic experiment, but there has also been a steady clarification of the subject as you see in the critical writings of M. Paul Valéry and M. Paul Claudel, the most eminent representatives now of opposed theories of poetic form. In M. Claudel's work there is a distinct step towards the organization of a freer poetic art although it may not be enough to create or establish a new type.

His *versets* vary somewhat in form but generally retain much of the character of Biblical prose. The cadences range from the elevated accents of Psalm and Canticle to tones of supplication and prayer, and to a more relaxed movement in long lines of narrative and description spaced as verses with a strong pause at the end of the line. It is a rhetorical prose to which the spacing in lines tends to give condensation and a weight of accent. The long line—it generally goes from fourteen to twenty syllables—is cadenced by the rhetorical accent, *l'accent de phrase*, but often tends like Biblical prose to a concealed anapaestic movement, especially in the closing cadences: It has a strong caesura in the middle which breaks the line into two, one of the halves at least, generally revealing this anapaestic rhythm;

Bientôt je serai avec ceux de mon espèce
et ne penserai guère à toi
Il n'y a pas d'ami sûr pour un pauvre
s'il ne trouve un plus pauvre que lui
. . . . . .
Quelle que soit l'injustice contre nous
et quelle que soit la misère.

Of course it is carefully varied by lines which quite fall out of the basic movement. So Whitman used to erase lines that suggested too clearly a poetic measure. Claudel uses rhyme except in the high canticle form of verse where the length and variation of the lines make it inadvisable. Indeed in his ordinary line it does not always sound very well, except when the accents are almost measured and the strong caesural break gives prominence to the rhyming distiches. Rhyme is a natural

climax to measured accents, but does not seem in place when the movement comes near to that of ordinary prose.

Sometimes this break in the line is formally recognized as constituting two lines and we have an arrangement which with its rhymes resembles in a general way a well known quatrain form, as in the "Hyme à Saint Benoit."

Plutôt que de vaincre Satan, il est plus simple
de s'en garder
L'acte vaut mieux que le sermon.
Plutôt que de lutter contre le monde, il est plus
simple de ne pas le garder
Et de tirer son capuchon.
Puisque Dieu lui-même y demeure, et nous,
Pourquoi sortir de son temple?
Pourquoi regretter le chaos?
Et puisque notre bonheur dans le Ciel sera de
chanter tous ensemble,
Pourquoi ne pas commencer aussitôt?

But this kind of verse suggests perhaps a too disadvantageous comparison with the powerfully handled quatrains of the reviled Hugo and other great poets. The grave liturgical movement of his "Saint François-Xavier" is more original, more typical of his form.

Maintenant depuis Goa jusqu'à la Chine et depuis l'Ethiopie
jusqu'au Japon,
Il a ouvert la tranchée partout et tracé la circonvallation.
Le diable n'est pas si large que Dieu, l'enfer n'est pas si vaste
que l'amour,
Et Jéricho après tout n'est pas si grande que l'on n'en fasse
le tour.

. . . . . .

Il presse les issues, il presse à toutes les entrées de Sodome;
L'immense Asie tout entière est cernée par ce petit homme
Plus pénétrant que la trompette et plus supérieur que le tonnerre,
Il a cité la foule enfermée et proclame la lumière.

It is not so revolutionary a form of literary art as the pattern poetry of M. Fort or Miss Amy Lowell, but rather a sort of biblical prose regularized into verse by the use of rhyme and the spacing of lines. It has something of the freedom of prose in the unmeasured syllabification of its lines, greatly limited however by the necessity of keeping a certain uniformity of tone and of movement. It cannot make the same free and effective use of *enjambement* as the older metrical systems, as the Alexandrines of Musset and Hugo for example, or as English blank verse, and it is more confined in the range of the interior pause. In lay subjects where the accents are less solemn, it has often the effect of a staccato prose.

M. Claudel's poetry owes very much to the rich hagiology of the Catholic Church and its shining examples of a saintly austerity which puts aside the ordinary interests of the world as a passing show of little or no account. His poetic conceptions have a severe sublimity in this way and his psychology has the originality of a spiritual askesis which is unfamiliar except as a tradition to the modern spirit. Sainte Scolastique in her last hours listening to the discourse of her brother St. Benedict and possessing blessedness in his mere presence, while God sends a storm of wind and rain "in order that the angels may hear that conversation in tranquility":

Elle a fait ce qu'il lui a commandé de faire
et elle sait que c'était bien.
L'abbesse dans le grand vestige de l'abbé
attentive jusqu'à la fin
Maintenant ce n'est pas qu'elle écoute mot
à mot et comprenne tout ce qu'il dit;

Benoît est avec elle simplement, et demain
elle sera dans le Paradis.

The poetry, the psychology and the atmosphere of miracle there take us again to the beatific visions the Italian painters of the 14th and 15th centuries have left us of angelic choirs bending over the death-bed of the saint. But there is a beautiful human element in it too of feminine and sisterly sympathy. It is the gift and the imagination of a Dominican orator, a great one, who is wise enough in these days to give his preachings the form and name of poetry.

This unworldly standard of the Saint is one which may find in the heart of the outcast and socially disreputable something that is nearer to grace than the spirit that has been dried up in social ambitions and surface decencies. In this way Claudel's poem on Verlaine puts almost a mantle of righteousness on him as one who at least disdained the make-believe of the world. With all its candour it is profoundly sympathetic and illustrates excellently what is basically original in Claudel's treatment of his subjects.

Le vieux Socrate chauve grommelle dans sa barbe emmêlée;
Car un absinthe coûte cinquante centimes et il en faut au moins
quatre pour être saoûl;
Mais il aime mieux être ivre que semblable à aucun de nous,
Car son cœur est comme empoisonné, depuis que le pervertit
Cette voix de femme ou d'enfant—ou d'un ange qui lui parlait
dans le Paradis!
Que Catulle Mendès garde la gloire et Sully Prudhomme ce grand
poète,
Il refuse de recevoir sa patente en cuivre avec une belle casquette.
Que d'autres gardent le plaisir avec la vertu, les femmes, l'honneur
et les cigares!

Il couche tout nu dans un garni avec une indifférence tartare,
Il connait les marchands de vin par leur petit nom, il est a
l'hôpital comme chez lui;
Mais il vaut mieux d'être mort que d'être comme les gens d'ici.

The poem ends with one of those poetic elevations, perorations of an orator, which often come to him at the close of his piece when the rather hard, dogmatically fixed movement of his imagination has kindled into greater freedom. He has a vision of Verlaine departing this life in a sort of clouded glory, taking ship like an old king of Vikings sent on his death voyage; "none knowing what hap he should meet", says the Anglo-Saxon epic, but Claudel is a little better informed.

. . . il a rejoint le bateau qui l'a débarqué
Et qui l'attendait dans ce port noir, mais nous n'avons rien
remarqué,
Rien que la détonation de la grande voile, qui se gonfle et le bruit
d'une puissante étrave dans l'écume,
Rien qu'une voix comme une voix de femme ou d'enfant, ou d'un
ange qui appelait;
Verlaine, dans la brume.

That passage may also serve as an illustration of Claudel's technique of "sonorities" which takes the place of measured melody in his system; that salvo of farewell in *détonation*, those explosive nasals, and perhaps the valuation of green shining seas in those rhymed *u's*, the *vibrements divins des mers virides* which Rimbaud found in that vowel.

But it is rather Claudel's critical theory I wish to notice here than his poetry. His critical essays are subtle and acute. His theory involves a rather abstract separation of prose as designed only to give knowledge

from poetry as designed only to produce an impression, "the equivalent of an object or emotion" and having therefore this sensational or aesthetic use of expression as its chief law. The end of the one is "a state of knowledge", of the other, "a state of pleasure".[1] Of course he admits, in a foot-note, that there is a large zone in literature in which both ends are combined, but it is this abstract separation of knowing and getting pleasure in literature that enables him to reach the two points he has chiefly in view. First, as a mystic he would depreciate the element of "intelligence" in poetry as having only a secondary place there (*en seconde ligne*) [2] and, second, he can in this way include certain forms of poetic prose even in the technical conception of poetry; with the result of course of making the old metrical system obviously inadequate as a basis for explaining or analysing the rhythms of this new material. So we get the elements of a new system of analysis dependent on a delicate valuation of sonorities, blanks, preparations, shocks and resolutions, the response of pitch to gravity and other criteria subjectively very uncertain in application. Claudel himself can use it very interestingly as in his severe onslaught on Hugo and the old Romantic school for their mechanical use of devices in style and rhythm. Perhaps he is inclined to overlook the fact that even too obvious mechanical elements in the structure of the style may not always destroy its intellectual and imaginative values. Macaulay's prose is terribly mechanical in structure with its

[1] *Positions et Propositions,* p. 11.

[2] See *Lettre à l'abbé Bremond,* "Sur l'Inspiration Poétique," Idem, p. 96.

constant reliance on balance, antithesis and climax, the short sentence and the enumeration, all of the most formal type, and his phrases have the established or conventional standard of correctness that would qualify them, every one, for a college phrasebook; but all that does not alter the fact that he can describe and narrate with the vigour of expression and the constructive symmetry which make a masterpiece. Hugo and Musset have their deficiencies of course, but who has now the moving accent of Hugo and the broad flash that lights up a whole horizon, and I fancy Musset's emotional delicacy and the the charming confessional candour of his easy line are worth a good deal in the history of French poetry. It looks as if M. Claudel's theological prepossessions were dictating his judgments with little regard for his canon that the power of giving pleasure by expression, the seductive movement, *le mouvement entrainant*, "no matter how it is nourished", is the chief thing in poetry, *la chose principale.*

But when he is dealing with a realist like Flaubert whom he dislikes, he applies his standards of rhythmical sonority in the severest way. The opening lines of *Salammbo* are shown to be lamentably wanting in their ineffective treatment of the vowel *a*, and unrhythmically flat as compared with the sonorous swell of a sentence from Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer.* As if that were a fair way of judging the great realist for whom clear language, clear spacing and connexion in the thoughts, and clear grouping of elements for the imaginative vision

were the great things in style. How if one were to apply these tests to the work of Rimbaud?

One must doubt, too, the value of arguments and comparisons which imply that the language of poetry or of any art can be so free from a conventional mould as to make the reproduction of nature its technical standard. There is no science, whatever else there may be, in comparing in this way the rhythm of verse to the vaguely suggestive incoherence of nature's music. The great poets did not mean their comparisons to be taken in that sense. Nor can we even compare it technically, as M. Claudel does, to the vivacity of tone and movement in the conversation of two Parisian ladies: "*Quelle originalité et quelle verdeur dans les attaques! Quel tour toujour nouveau! Quelles coupes!*" But these bird-like warblings "*ces roulades d'oiseau*", are manifestations of nature which art cannot reproduce in their actuality with the living rhetoric of eye, gesture and personality which give them charm. M. Claudel's clever abstraction of the single element of rhythm from this hypothetically musical dialogue as heard "behind a wall", without even the sense of the words reaching the auditor, is much the same thing as if a musician were to reproduce the sounds of the sea exactly as he heard them without any artistic symmetrizing which suggests the powerful thing they come from with all its imaginative associations. If you abstract the bare rhythm from its associations for the intelligence, the Homeric *poluploisboio thalasses* itself might seem nothing more than the splashings of a baby in its washtub. In poetry at any rate, of any serious kind, the in-

telligence is not in "the second line", that is merely a philosophic abstraction, but is quite inextricably blended with the rhythmical sensation.

A mystical theory of "pure poetry" naturally tends to subordinate the rational and logical elements in it, even more than a purely aesthetic theory does, and it may go very well with an excessive appreciation of the sensuous elements in expression as if in them alone resided the *logos* that carries the spirit to a sort of infinitude of thought. The sentences from Rimbaud which M. Claudel selects for highest praise (*"ce texte superbe"*) are a good enough example of that poetic prose which is so perfect at times in Chateaubriand and Maurice de Guerin. They describe a stage of spiritual experience during which, as Rimbaud says himself, he came to regard the very disorder of his spirit as something sacred, a confession from the father of *la poésie pure* which is not without significance. I give the paragraphs in full, with the parts M. Claudel quotes, in italics:

(1) Ma santé fut menacée. La terreur venait. Je tombais dans des sommeils de plusieurs jours, et, levé, je continuais les rêves les plus tristes. J'étais mûr pour le trépas, *et par une route de dangers, ma faiblesse me menait aux confins du monde et de la Cimmérie, patrie de l'ombre et des tourbillons.*

(2) Je dus voyager, distraire les enchantements assemblés sur mon cerveau. *Sur la mer, que j'aimais comme si elle eût dû me laver d'une souillure, je voyais se lever la croix consolatrice.* J'avais été damné par l'arc-en-ciel. Le Bonheur était ma fatalité, mon remords, mon ver: ma vie serait toujours trop immense pour être devouée à la force et à la beauté.

Those passages are amongst the best, certainly amongst the clearest, of the exaltations and fantasmagories (it is

Rimbaud's own word) of *Une Saison en Enfer*. It is good prose certainly, of the firmly moulded Latin type, with decisive accents and pauses and a delicate movement towards climax which is not made too obvious. M. Claudel might say of the first perhaps two shocks absorbed in a resolution and closing in a successful fanfare. But the power of its style is better thought of as lying in the fine psychological precision of the words and the peculiar neurotic lucidity with which they define a mystical spiritual experience. M. Claudel refuses to "profane" the first passage by any technical comments; he leaves the reader, he says, to discover for himself "all the beauties of consonances, of alliteration and of movement which it contains. It is only the music that counts he declares: *ce n'est plus porté que par la musique, c'est comme un beau cygne qui vole les ailes étendues dans un milieu élyséen.*"

On the second passage (*"cet autre vers"*) however, M. Claudel makes a note pointing out the felicity of the bitter and green-shining apparition of the word *souillure*[1] and the "epiphanical impression" which the word *Croix* makes, the term being as it were enlarged and broken in the cavity of an iambus, *"comme élargi et rompu dans la cavité d'une iambe."* M. Claudel's exalted estimate of Rimbaud is naturally affected by his view of *Une Saison en Enfer* as *un acte de foi catholique* and one which he says helped him more than anything else in the religious crisis of his youth. It is with these sentences from

[1] From Rimbaud's idea of the colour equivalence in vowels: *"U vert . . . vibrements divins des mers virides."*

Rimbaud before him as examples of what can be done in unmetrical verse that he goes on to make some general reflections on versification. They bear more, however, on the exceptional rigidity of the old French Alexandrine than on the freer systems in use in English poetry. The technique of the Alexandrine, he says, impairs and hardens the sensibility of the artist with its "primary rhythms" and rhyming sonorities. "The obligation of rhyming throws the "poet back on banal and hackneyed associations of sounds". . . . It never allows the phrase to flow out into the splendid "estuary of an unpaired syllable". Here again we have the abstractness of a theory which does not recognize sufficiently the subtle art of the real poet. Who would say that Keats's use of the rhyming couplet had coarsened his sensibility to rhythm, or that the obligation to rhyme had made the versification of our great poets an association of banal and hackneyed sounds at the close of their lines? In "Rabbi Ben Ezra" Browning can take such a banal pair (abstractly considered) as "plan" and "man" and make of them a star. And so can any true poet. Abstract theory does not fit the secret of art. It is the case of Verlaine who, in a half-freakish mood, called rhyme *ce bijou d'un sou* and yet used it constantly himself and excellently. Not that I have anything to say against unrhymed verse and "the superb estuary of an unpaired syllable". That is only what you find on every page of Milton and Shakespeare. If M. Claudel's intention were simply, as Paul Fort puts it, to make versification easier, *alléger notre métier*, there would be something to say for it at that low level. But

Claudel's mystical exaltation of a very sensuous element in poetic art comes from the passion of the mystic to escape rational control as if it were an imprisonment of the soul. And in that there is always the danger confessed by Rimbaud: "*Je finis par trouver sacré del le désordre de mon esprit.*"

But all the same Claudel's critical essays are important as a real effort to organize this new third form of literary art which is struggling for recognition, and to define its character technically. In that way it does something to clarify an ideal which was so confused and incoherent in Whitman that he almost gave it up. Yet Whitman remains the great stimulus both by the breadth of his work and an afflatus which often gave his line the soar of great poetry. His ideas of a new poetic art which should discard the standards of the past may not come to much as an independent system, but they will work alone with all these new experiments like a leaven in the old one. There are free elements in the old metrical system which are not formalized in it but give the poet plenty of room for rhythmical variation. The real poet does not feel any monotony in his mould whether it is as restricted as that of the sonnet or as free as the ode is. His movement is full of those delicate variations in which the real significance of a mould reveals itself. All great art has worked from a basic conception of unity towards the freedom and variety it could achieve within that, not from a characterless conception of variety to a casual kind of harmony. And rhythmical variety, in writ-

ten speech at least, can make its value felt only on some clearly established basis of identity. The philosophic Dante saw the cogency of that principle for lyrical music long ago.

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